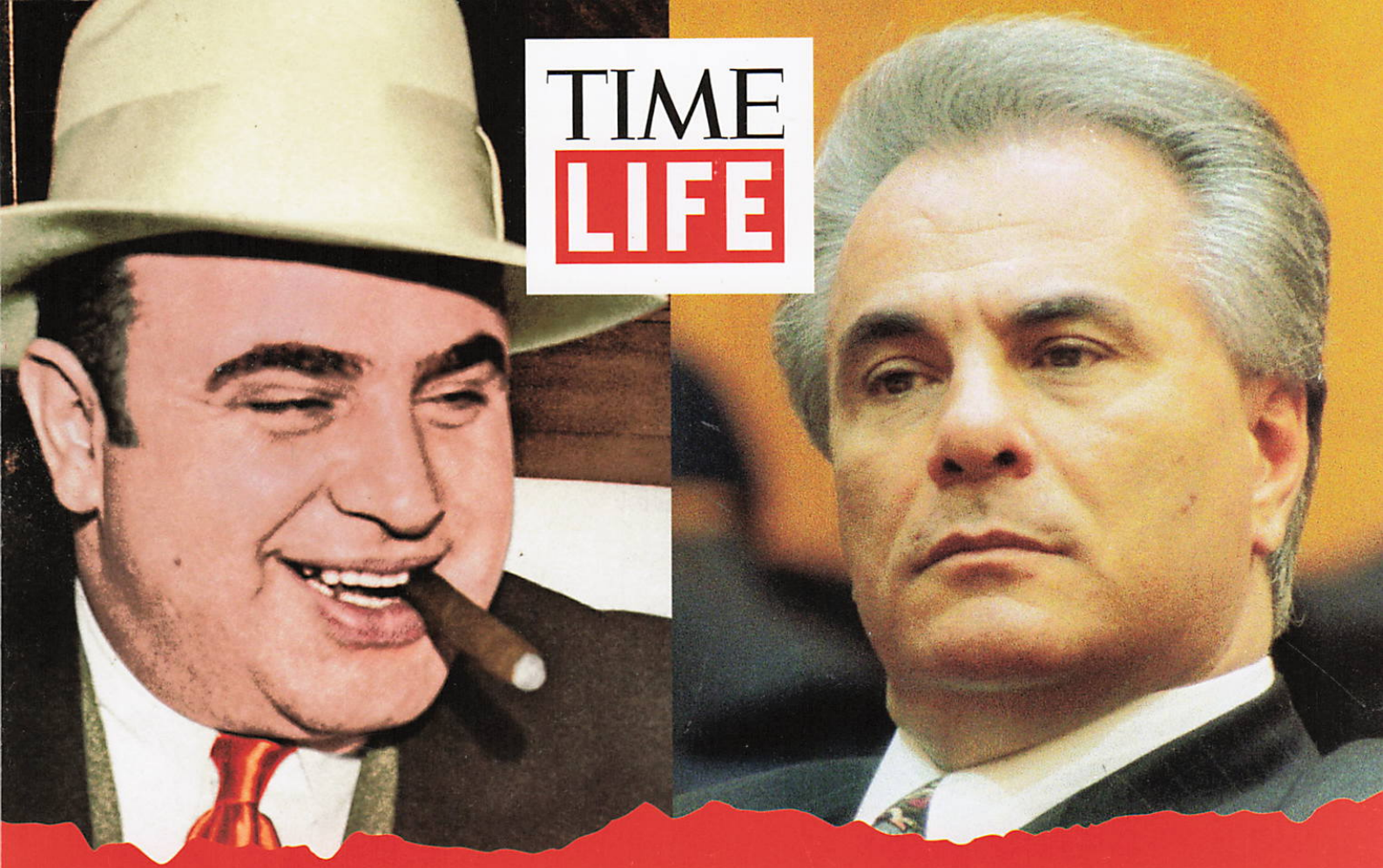

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AL CAPONE'S bulletproof Cadillac was made special for the Chicago mobster in 1928 and was painted black and green so as to appear identical to the police cars in his hometown.

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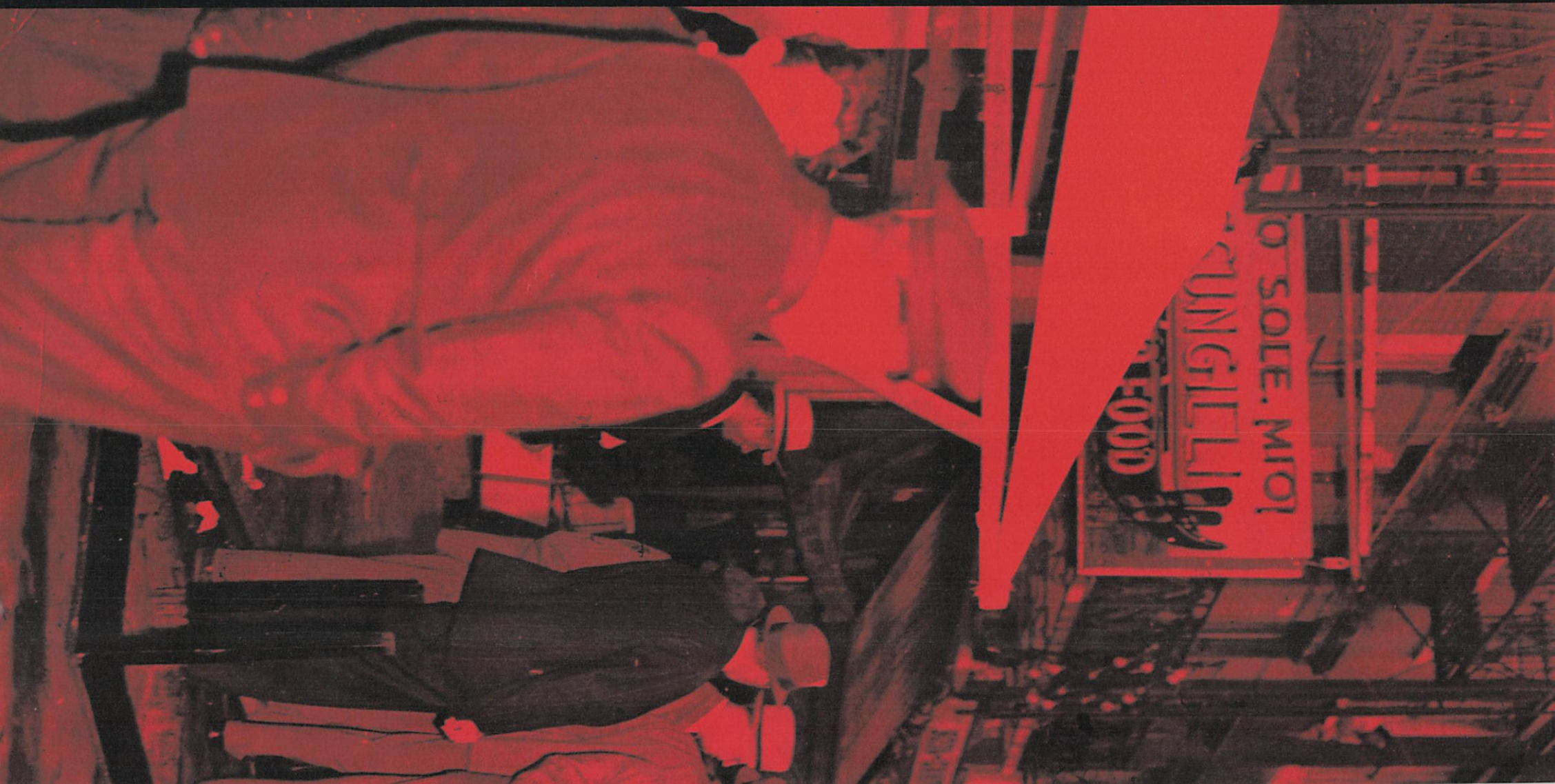
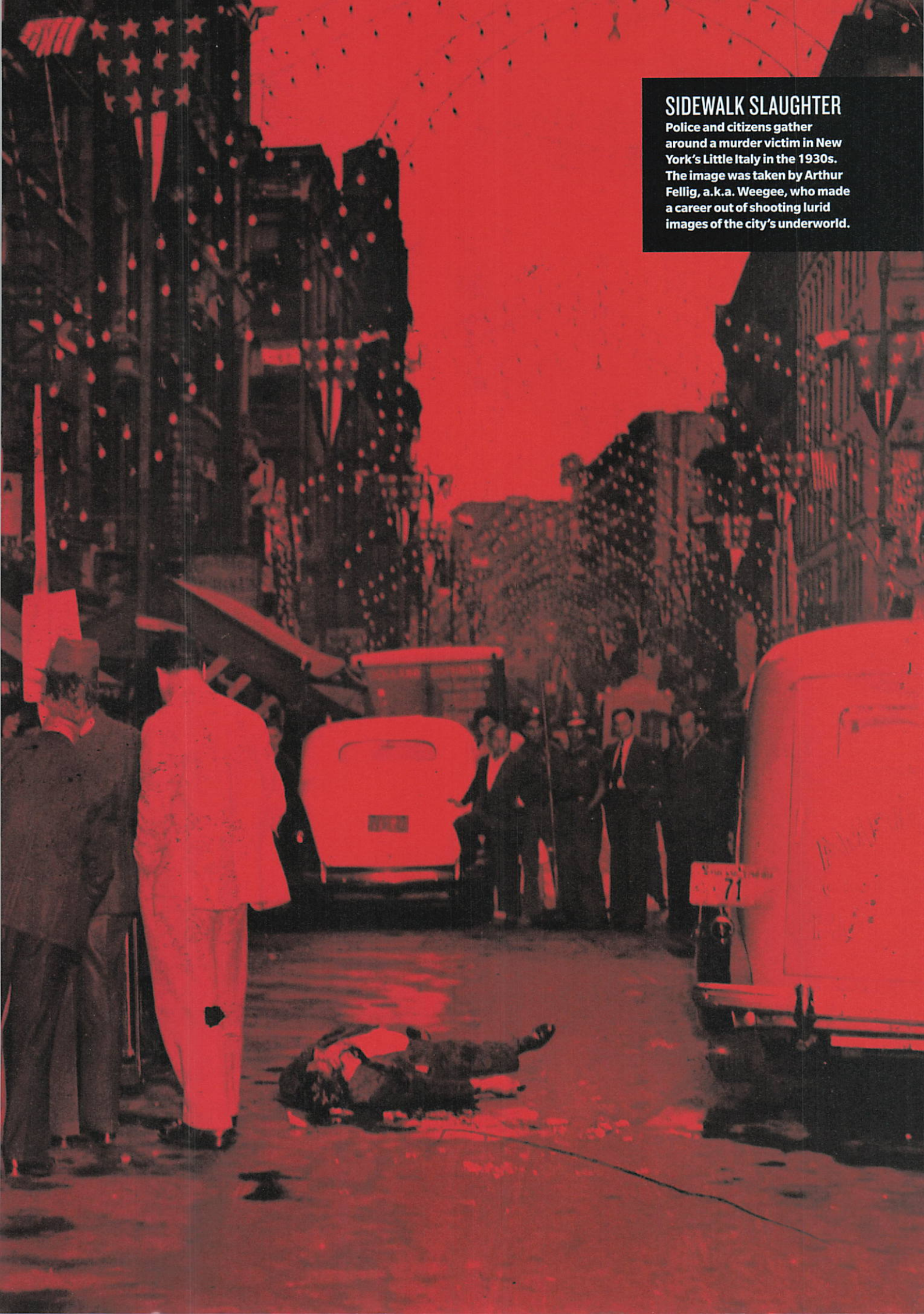
The reign of Gotti led to a succession of "me first" Mafiosi in the digital age

RUMRUNNERS COOL THEIR heels in a Chicago lineup in 1930 after the Chicago Prohibition Bureau targeted organized crime. Bootlegging proved so profitable, it was estimated that the city had 10,000 speakeasies.

1 THE MOB IN PHOTOS





SIDEWALK SLAUGHTER

Police and citizens gather around a murder victim in New York's Little Italy in the 1930s. The image was taken by Arthur Fellig, a.k.a. Weegee, who made a career out of shooting lurid images of the city's underworld.

MAN IN THE MIDDLE

Al Capone, flanked by lawyers Michael Ahern, left, and Albert Fink, attends a grand jury hearing in 1931. After a jury convicted Capone, the judge sentenced him to 11 years and charged him $215,000 in back taxes.

POLICE SCENE

At the Adonis Club Massacre, a deadly 1925 Christmas Day clash ensued between Al Capone's and Richard "Peg Leg" Lonergan's gangs. Capone was released on bail, but some believe he fired the fatal shot at Lonergan.

COVERING UP

Spectators attend the opening day of Al Capone's trial, Oct. 6, 1931. Upon learning that jurors had been bribed, the judge had the bailiff swap the panel with those in another courtroom.

THE PRICE OF BUSINESS

Mourners gather at St. Raymond's Cemetery in the Bronx for the 1932 funeral of Vincent "Mad Dog" Coll, who was assassinated after trying to shake down Dutch Schultz and Owney Madden.

A POPULAR SUBJECT

Although Mickey Cohen had lots of shady dealings, he loved the limelight—and *Life* magazine loved the mobster in return, its news crew lighting up such gatherings as this 1958 night out in Los Angeles with, at left, his girlfriend, actress Liz Renay.

GOTTI IS GONE

Pallbearers carry John Gotti's coffin from his home in 2002. The "Dapper Don" was beloved in his Queens neighborhood, and admirers tossed red roses as his hearse wended its way to Saint John Cemetery.

2 THE CRIME WORLD

IN THE LATE 1920S, TWO crime families, Masseria (based out of east Harlem) and Maranzano (based in lower Manhattan and Brooklyn), began jockeying for position and swallowing up smaller rackets across the city.

2

BLOOD AT THE ROOTS

1900–1931

BY T.J. ENGLISH

THE AMERICAN UNDERWORLD IS AN UNHOLY CREATION, baptized in blood. It began as a survival mechanism, a strategy for staying alive—and thriving—in the New World.

Advancement in this world involved two primary elements: physical and economic power. In burgeoning urban jungles, immigrant gangs vied for territory. A system of illegal commerce evolved. The rackets—gambling, prostitution, extortion, graft, and eventually illegal booze and narcotics—were the lubricants that greased the wheel. But what ensured its functioning over more than a century has been violence: for commerce, for revenge, for love. And all in pursuit of the American dream.

The underworld first took shape in the mid- to late 19th century, in the muddy slums of lower Manhattan, when the powers that controlled the criminal world and the powers that ran the city became one and the same. Through the use of physical intimidation and sometimes brute force, the gangs delivered votes to corrupt politicians on election day. Municipal contracts with "connected" businessmen created a bounty of cash that trickled down to the underworld like fertilizer.

Eventually, that system became known as "the Mob." The term comes

RESIDENTS OF BANDIT'S Roost, New York's most dangerous spot, in 1888. Reports of violence prompted reformers to improve conditions for the poor.

The gangs profited greatly from gambling and extortion, primarily among their own immigant brethren.

from a time in the latter part of the 19th century when a man would get up on a crate or soapbox to orate. On the street, or from within a tavern or bar, he would explain to those gathered what he could do for them out there in the urban jungle. The unspoken agreement was that he would achieve things for them by any means necessary, including violence, and, in return, his people would enlist themselves as his minions. The Mob included men on both sides of the law: criminals, dirty cops, crooked politicians and shady businessmen—anyone who was willing to play the game and pay the price.

In many books and studies on the early development of the Mob in America, much has been written about the Irish. From the late 1840s through the 1870s, the Irish were the first immigrant group to arrive en masse. They came on "coffin ships" in the wake of the great potato famine, under the most desperate of conditions. As they contended with displacement and starvation, some among this refugee class were connected to resistance societies back in the Old Country. With names like the Whiteboys and the Ribbonmen, these loosely structured secret societies engaged in acts of sabotage and violence against the British Crown forces in Ireland. In America, these underground brotherhoods formed the basis for the earliest street gangs in America.

In cities like New York and New Orleans, the gangs profited greatly from gambling and extortion, primarily among their own immigrant brethren. But it was not these groups that eventually turned into what is today referred to as organized crime. This evolution took place among the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant class with a business and political organization known as Tammany Hall.

THE *NEW YORK SUN* NOTED in 1884 that the Short Tail gang, left, were "thieves, pickpockets and highwaymen." They terrorized lower Manhattan, above.

Formed in Philadelphia in 1772, Tammany Hall was designed to be an outlet for businessmen to band together and assert influence over the political process. Chapters of Tammany Hall sprang up in other cities, most notably New York. The organization affiliated itself with the Democratic Party and became infused with the new Irish immigrant class, which was put to work in all manner of street-level organizing, primarily under the auspices of the notorious political operative William M. "Boss" Tweed. Eventually, as the Irish grew in number, they made Tammany Hall their own. Many thrived within this structure.

Long before illegal booze or cocaine became established as an economic catalyst for organized crime, the primary money stream came from gambling. Sports betting was illegal, and lucrative, but card games were a national draw among gangsters and sporting men. Big cities such as New York, Chicago, Kansas City and New Orleans became known for their lavish gambling parlors that sometimes included houses of prostitution and were allowed to function through payoffs to law enforcement and Mob bosses. In the latter years of the 19th century, dirty money from gambling made the world go round.

This crucial nexus between criminal rackets such as gambling and prostitution and the political and municipal structure of U.S. cities both large and small is what became known as the underworld. Those who played its game—and escaped the inevitable gang wars and municipal scandals—usually advanced in society.

IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY, THE INFLUX OF ITAL-ian immigrants into the U.S. began in earnest. Like the Irish before them, these immigrants came with little more than the clothes on their backs. What some of these immigrants did bring, however, was their own unique criminal tradition of commerce and respect, rooted in the villages

of Sicily. This tradition was known to some as *onorata societa* (the honored society), to others as *la mano nera* (the Black Hand) and to others simply as *la mafia*.

As with the American gangs founded by a generation of Irish-famine immigrants and their offspring, the Mafia was based at least in part on intimidation, the threat of violence and even murder. The Sicilian version in America would come to be known as *La Cosa Nostra* (our thing) and would be composed of *gli amici* (the friends), who had to be Italian-born, and *gli amici degli amici* (the friends of friends), extended business associates. The Mafiosi even had their own version of racketeering, which the Sicilians called *pizzo*. Defined literally, *pizzu* meant the beak of a small bird, such as a canary or a lark. Back in Sicily, when the Mafia don referred to *fari vagnari a pizzu* (wetting the beak), he was talking about a system of tribute.

The Italian Mafia did not immediately assert itself in this new world of Irish Mob bosses and American-born political canvassers. Initially, in many cities, the Black Hand was content to prey mostly on other Italian immigrants through a system of extortion of local business. In the newspapers of the day, this became known as the protection racket—paying a fee to the Mob so that your place of business would not be harassed or even closed down through arson or other acts of intimidation. By the time police departments in places like Chicago, New York and New Orleans began to attempt to eradicate the Black Hand, Italian organized crime had already begun to advance up the food chain.

What distinguished the Mafia from other criminal fraternities was the organizational structure. Individual units were known as families, or *borgatas*, and within each crime family were smaller crews. The hierarchy involved *soldatos* (soldiers), *capos* (underbosses) and the *capo di tutti capi*, the boss of all bosses. Decisions such as the commission of murders or other criminal acts were made within the hierarchy and had to be approved by higher-ups in the organization. Each fledging member of the Mafia pledged allegiance to the code of *omertà*, which revolved around the concept of manliness as defined by a person's ability to "do the

SPEAKEASIES, LIKE THIS one in San Francisco, offered a place to relax. Yet Prohibition also brought violence, as with the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, opposite.

right thing" and keep quiet when facing the police.

The American underworld had never seen anything like the Mafia. This was not only a criminal organization but a cultural tradition deeply rooted in the Italian psyche, a tradition fathers passed along to their sons. Though most Italian immigrants and Italian Americans were not affiliated in any way with the Mafia, it was such a powerful custom within the community that many, out of fear or respect, chose to look the other way. While Irish, Jewish, German and African-American gangsters continued to operate, the Mafia brought an organizational structure to the Mob that was unprecedented. Consequently, organized crime structures with links to trade unions, politicians and criminal rackets sprang up in many cities, especially port cities with a growing labor force.

Theirs was a growth industry, generating an underground economy facilitated by graft and corruption. Money from gambling and labor racketeering fueled the system, and power bases were established. It was moderately lucrative, but gangsters in the early years of the century were still street criminals. And then something happened that transformed the underworld and elevated organized crime to the level of nation-state.

BY THE TIME THE 18TH AMENDMENT BECAME THE law of the land on Jan. 17, 1920, the temperance movement had been brewing for decades. Primarily, the movement to outlaw the manufacture, sale and consumption of booze was aimed at "saloon culture." It was believed by many among the WASP upper class that drinking liquor and hanging out in saloons—prime breeding grounds for Tammany-style social strategizing—were at the root of American dysfunction. A latent racism informed this thinking, as saloon culture was associated with the immigrant class, primarily the Irish, Germans and Italians.

Passage of the law had a social impact over the next 13 years in ways still felt today. In a sense, the onset of Prohibition gave birth to modern organized crime in America.

The initial effect derived from the fact that a sizable portion of the population imbibed, and they were not about to quit. After a period in which people attempted to make their own homemade liquor (thus the term "bathtub gin"), it was clear that a system was needed to deliver decent illegal booze to the people. And the people needed a place to drink, removed from the prying eyes of the law. Speakeasies, where passwords were required for entry, became not only the new saloons but secret caverns into what was then considered cool or hip. Drinking culture became a thrilling act of cultural rebellion. Volumes of novels and hundred of movies have sought to capture the excitement of the Roaring Twenties, the era in which *The Great Gatsby* is set. Prohibiting people from consuming a product they desired had the opposite effect of what was intended, and it helped to establish a criminal empire that would survive long after the act was rescinded.

During Prohibition, major criminal organizations took shape in New York, Chicago, St. Louis, Boston, Kansas City, Miami, Seattle, San Francisco and Cleveland, with satellite subcontractors in smaller cities and rural areas around the country. Initially, various bootlegging groups clashed violently for territory and clientele. For example, Alphonse "Al" Capone took over the illegal bootlegging in Chicago through a campaign of gangland warfare, a war that included the bloody St. Valentine's Day Massacre on Feb. 14, 1929.

In New York, a consortium of Sicilian, Italian-American, Jewish and Irish gangsters ruled a bootlegging combine that operated, in part, thanks to the sympathetic Mayor Jimmy Walker, a smooth-talking Tammany Hall creation

who was known to discreetly frequent the best of the speakeasies. It served as a nexus for booze smuggled into the U.S. from England and Canada and as a distribution outlet all along the Eastern seaboard. Profits were astronomical, and many notorious Mob bosses made millions during this era.

BY THE MID-1920S, THE TWO LARGEST MAFIA FACtions in New York were the Masseria family, led by Giuseppe "Joe the Boss" Masseria, originally from Menfi but raised in Marsala; and the Maranzanos, from Castellammare del Golfo, just west of Palermo. The Maranzanos settled primarily in Brooklyn, where they established a number of warehouses and speakeasies. The Masserias were based in Manhattan, and it didn't take long for the two factions to became violent rivals. They hijacked each other's delivery trucks, strong-armed speakeasies into using only their products, and generally sought to cripple each other's production and delivery supply through sabotage and mayhem. Eventually, this contretemps exploded into what became known as the Castellammarese War.

Among the most astute of leaders to emerge from this Mafia gang war was Charles "Lucky" Luciano, born Salvatore Lucania in Lercara Friddi, Sicily, in 1897. In New York City, young Lucania was frequently arrested, and some say that while being processed through the system his name was transposed from Lucania to Luciano. Lucky Luciano grew up on the Lower East Side of Manhattan with some young hoodlums who would become some of the leading lights of the American underworld over the next half-century. Two of these men were Jewish (Meyer Lansky and Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel), and the third (Frank Costello, born Francesco Castiglia) was from Lauropoli, in Calabria.

These men, while still in their 20s, came to realize that the Old World Mafia bosses from Sicily were an impediment to the development of the Mob in America. Luciano, Lansky and the others had been raised in the U.S. and had come to appreciate a form of corporate capitalism unique to America. These men believed that territorial bloodletting, with its roots in the Old Country, was contrary to a modern business philosophy based on organizational coexistence. What followed in the late 1920s and into the next decade was a methodical changing of the guard engineered by Luciano, Lansky and others of their generation, architects of a newer, modernized American underworld based on a corporate model.

For this transition to take place, the old-timers had to be eliminated. Luciano played a key role by playing both sides against the middle. On behalf of Salvatore Maranzano, he betrayed Joe the Boss, luring him to an Italian restaurant in Coney Island. Luciano went into the men's room, and when he returned, Joe the Boss had been shot multiple times by a crew of hit men. With Masseria dead, Salvatore Maranzano declared himself the *capo di tutti capi*. He made Luciano boss of Masseria's gang. On the afternoon of Sept. 10, 1931, Maranzano was visited at his office by what he believed were four agents from the U.S. Treasury Department there to inspect his books. In fact, they were killers sent by Luciano and Lansky. Maranzano was shot and stabbed to death in his office.

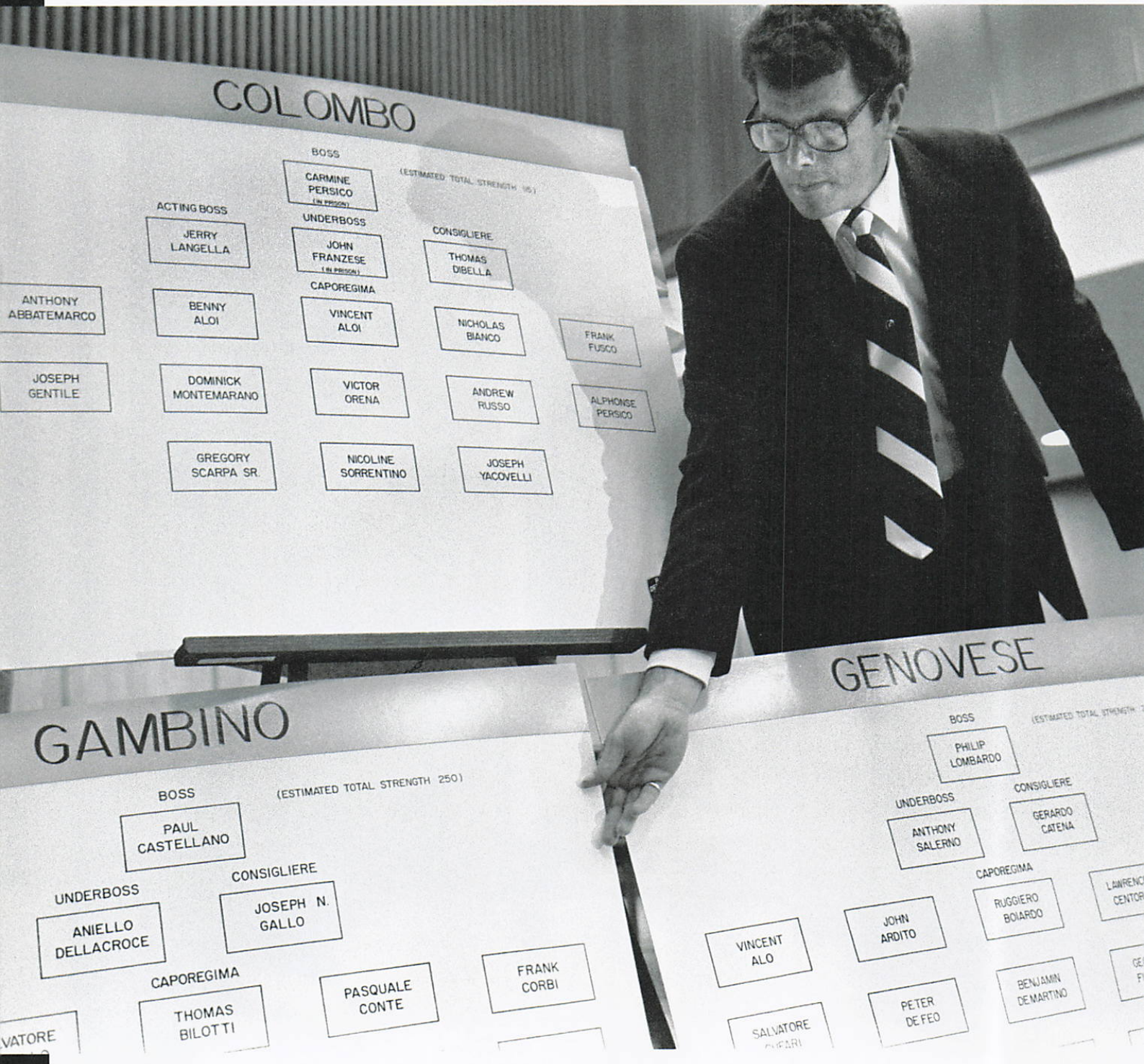
The time had come for the birth of a new American underworld. Luciano, Lansky and the others knew that Prohibition would not last forever. Public opinion had turned against it, and over the years it had unleashed unprecedented levels of murder and mayhem. It would be another two years before the Volstead Act was repealed; in the meantime, a new generation of American gangsters had forged an alliance that would be more reflective of the multi-ethnic crime world in which they all now operated.

At a hotel in Chicago, in the fall of 1931, Luciano met with the heads of the major Mafia factions in the U.S. It was agreed that a new ruling structure would be created. There would be no *capo di tutti capi*. Instead, the entire country would be ruled by a commission that included the heads of the five Mafia families in New York, the Outfit in Chicago led by Capone and the Buffalo crime family led by Stefano Magaddino. Luciano was appointed chairman. The underworld had positioned itself to confront any eventualities and to grow so that it could become, as Meyer Lansky would put it, "bigger than U.S. Steel."

LUCKY LUCIANO'S LUCK ran out in 1936 when a court convicted him of running brothels. Right, Salvatore Maranzano's life was ended by assassins in 1931.

The Five Families

The Mafia was once shrouded in secrecy. But that all changed in 1963, when former mobster Joe Valachi testified before the U.S. Senate in televised hearings and thrust La Cosa Nostra into the spotlight. **BY NANCY LAMBERT**



Joe Valachi's testimony before the Senate included his revealing the identities of the five major New York City families who ruled organized crime across the nation and, in some cases, across national borders. Many of the names were familiar to the FBI, but this was the public's introduction to La Cosa Nostra's powerful Five Families, the men who meticulously managed their criminal rackets like legitimate businesses.

The Mafia was not always so organized. By 1930, La Cosa Nostra was losing ground to rival organizations as years of deadly infighting decreased and distracted their ranks. Then, in 1931, the Young Turks, a group of ambitious gangsters led by Charles "Lucky" Luciano, stepped in. They ended the Castellammarese War by killing boss Joe Masseria. Rival Salvatore Maranzano then organized the splintered factions into the Five Families we know today. They were originally named for their bosses in 1931.

DETECTIVE JOSEPH Coffey explained the breakdown of the Mafia to the Senate Judiciary Committee in 1983.

Maranzano named himself *capo di tutti capi*, "boss of bosses," a position Luciano and his supporters wanted to see eradicated. So they eradicated it (by way of a bloody hit on Maranzano) and replaced the *capo di tutti capi* role with "the Commission"—a group of bosses from seven families, with a provision more could join, that would oversee La Cosa Nostra's operations and arbitrate any disputes.

The Five Families operated in New York City and surrounding areas, including New Jersey, Westchester and upstate New York, and they had major stakes in other areas of the country such as Florida and Las Vegas. Also, based on their specific connections, some families even had "specialty" rackets—the Lucchese family dominated truck hijacking out of JFK airport for decades thanks to its lock on the air-freight unions.

Beneath the structured surface, the Five Families are organizations that run on violence, and, as such, their family feuds—within the ranks and with one another—tend to have casualties. For decades, the Profaci/Colombo family has been riddled with bloody internal wars, which occasionally spill into public spaces, claiming innocent victims. Between the Families, bosses conspiring to off one another is practically tradition at this point, as are assassinations plotted from below.

The faces have changed, along with the nature of the rackets; technology has opened up new operations and expanded the Mafia's reach beyond geographical boundaries. Still, the original Five Families are intact and active today, and with the FBI's attention focused on international terrorism, it's likely they will continue with business as usual.

1

BONANNO

↓

MASSINO

When Joseph Massino assumed leadership in 1991 from Joe Bonanno [above], he tried to change the family name to Massino, but it never stuck

2

PROFACI

↓

COLOMBO

Named for Joe Profaci; renamed "Colombo" in 1963 after Joe Colombo Sr. [above] assumed leadership

3

MANGANO

↓

GAMBINO

Named for Vincent Mangano; renamed "Gambino" in 1957 after Carlo Gambino [above] assumed leadership

4

LUCIANO

↓

GENOVESE

Named for Charles "Lucky" Luciano; renamed "Genovese" in 1957 after Vito Genovese [above] assumed leadership

5

GAGLIANO

↓

LUCCHESE

Named for Tommaso "Tommy" Gagliano; renamed Lucchese in 1951 when Tommy "Three-Finger Brown" Lucchese [above] assumed leadership

THE NEW MANAGEMENT

1932-1957

BY MATTHEW PLUNKETT

THE FIVE FAMILIES WERE AMONG THE FORTUNATE FEW who weathered the economic storm of the Great Depression. As unemployment approached 25%, the newly minted chairman of the Commission, Charles "Lucky" Luciano, recognized what the weakening economy meant for Prohibition and organized crime's most lucrative business. "The public won't buy [Prohibition] no more," Luciano is reported to have said. "When they ain't got nothin' else, they got to have a drink or there's gonna be trouble." The depths of the Depression meant the nation's collective patience for a puritanical law was at an end. The country needed a drink, if only to numb the pain.

After a decade of staggering profits as bootleggers, Luciano and the rest of the Commission prepared for the legalization of alcohol. The Mafia doubled its early efforts toward gambling, extortion, loan-sharking, prostitution and the monopolization of specific industries. One of those targeted sectors was New York's garment industry. A typical garment manufacturer operated a fairly small shop with limited access to capital. Traditional banks shied away from offering loans

A HANDCUFFED LUCIANO, middle, is led from court in New York in 1936. Officials first sent him to prison and then deported him back to Italy in 1946.

due to the high level of competition and the mercurial nature of the trends in fashion. Without a ready supply of cash, manufacturers became prime targets for the Mob. In exchange for a loan with an exorbitantly high interest rate, the crime family requested a percentage of the shop's profits.

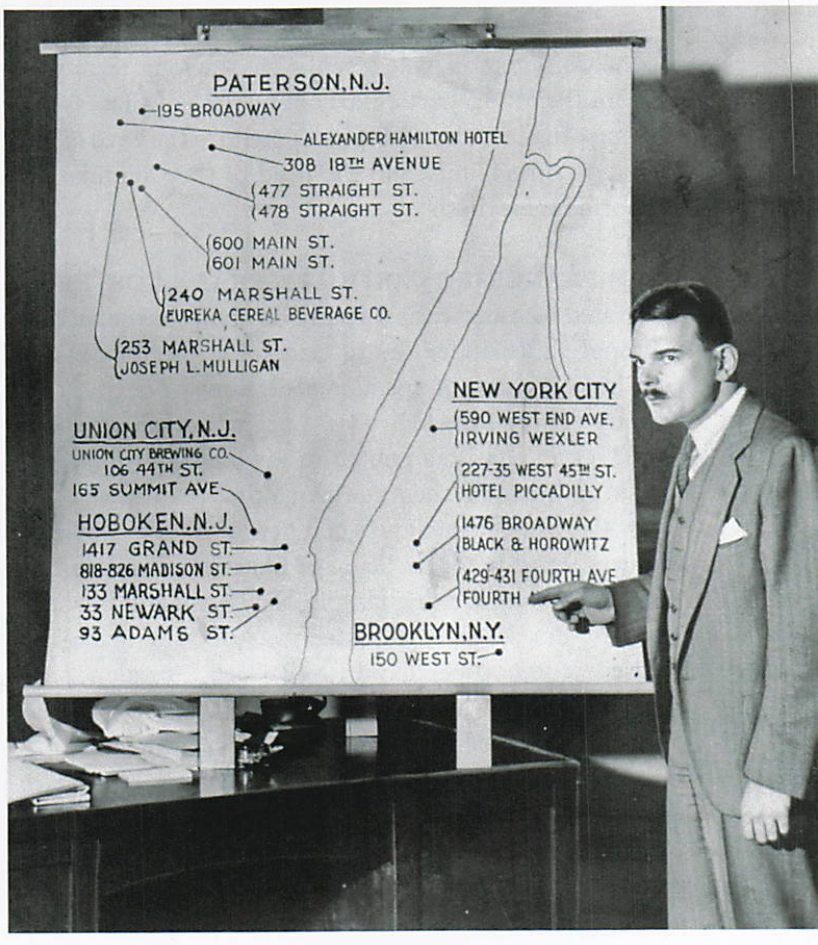
There was also a more direct road to profits: simple extortion. The experience of Max Blauner, as described by the *New York Times* in 1937, provides a typical example. Over a five-year period, Blauner paid out $45,500 (more than $780,000 in 2017 dollars) to avoid "physical harm from 'strong men' " or the release of "stench bombs" into his shop. His was not an isolated experience; by 1937, the garment industry alone provided roughly $2 million per year in profits for organized crime.

The Mafia also identified other, similar industries to exploit, such as trucking and restaurant enterprises. Either through extortion, loan-sharking or gaining control of the union—and frequently all three—the Mob quickly seized power. Ultimately, the price of the racketeering trickled down to the consumer in the form of higher prices.

By and large, municipal authorities turned a blind eye to this practice. Just as Luciano had theorized when forming the Commission in 1931, when the Mafia kept its operations in the shadows and avoided public violence, the local police departments and politicians would claim ignorance about the issue. The pervasive fear of testifying against the Mafia, as well as the regular bribes paid to various civic officials, also went a long way in furthering the success of the Five Families.

IN MARCH 1935, THE SITUATION IN NEW YORK abruptly changed. A growing sense of frustration at the corruption culminated in Governor Herbert Lehman taking decisive action. Lehman appointed an unknown former federal prosecutor named Thomas E. Dewey to investigate the rampant racketeering taking place across the city. The *New York Times* declared, "In some respects the investigation upon which Mr. Dewey is about to embark is the most ambitious of its kind undertaken in New York." Sensing an opportunity for future career advancement, Dewey made the most of his elevated platform to investigate a wide range of rackets plaguing New York.

"Crime cannot be investigated under a spotlight," said



FROM LEFT: FBI CHIEF J. Edgar Hoover; racketeer Owney Madden (at left) being escorted to a hearing; Helen Kelly (at right) testified against Luciano in 1936; prosecutor Thomas Dewey explained the reach of Waxey Gordon.

Dewey upon his appointment, and he promptly spent the next four months digging into the criminal underworld. His first big break came when one of his assistants, an African-American attorney named Eunice Carter, suggested Dewey turn his attention to the Women's Court in Manhattan. Carter told Dewey that all of the prostitutes brought before the court employed "the same bail-bondsmen, the same lawyers, the same alibis," as noted in a *Chicago Tribune* column. Carter's groundbreaking work proved that prostitution, just like the garment and trucking industries, was a racket controlled by organized crime. Buoyed by this breakthrough, Dewey pounced.

On Feb. 2, 1936, Dewey's team launched a synchronized raid across Manhattan and Brooklyn to try to disrupt the $12-million-per-year prostitution ring. Eighty women and seven men were arrested and "held in $10,000 bail as material witnesses," reported the *New York Times*. Dewey's decision to ask for unusually high bail was a deliberate strategy to allow time to attempt to convince some of the women to testify against the leaders of the racket.

By April 1936, it was clear that Dewey's plan had worked. After initially fleeing to the Mafia-controlled resort town of Hot Springs, Ark., Charles "Lucky" Luciano was apprehended and brought to New York to stand trial. In June, Luciano was found guilty of compulsory prostitution and sentenced to prison for 30 to 50 years. Many historians have argued that the case brought against Luciano was rather weak but that the mobster was likely convicted for the totality of his suspected crimes. Although the initial sentencing called for the man dubbed "Lucky" to spend the better part of his life in prison, Luciano's nickname held true. Shortly after the end of World War II, Luciano was released from prison by the governor of New York and allowed to return to Italy as a free man. The man serving as governor at the time was none other than Thomas E. Dewey himself.

Despite Luciano's conviction and subsequent imprisonment, his and Salvatore Maranzano's theories on organized crime were proved correct. They believed that a strong internal structure, both within each family and

for the Commission, was essential to the long-term viability of the Mafia, particularly in matters of succession. The smooth ascension of Frank Costello to the head of the Luciano crime family and the head of the Commission supported their thesis.

BORN FRANCESCO CASTIGLIA, FRANK COSTELLO emigrated to America as a young boy and sharpened his criminal skills under the tutelage of Giuseppe Masseria. Costello came of age alongside Lucky Luciano and Tommy "Three-Finger Brown" Lucchese, each of whom would, as Selwyn Raab noted in his book *Five Families*, "attain eminence in the American Mafia's pantheon."

By the time of Luciano's conviction in 1937, Costello was well known as the "King of Slots" for his domination of the slot-machine ring in New York and beyond. *Five Families* claims that Costello's 25,000 slot machines grossed $500,000 per day in New York City alone. Although Costello was arrested for tax evasion in 1939 due to his unexplained revenue, it was his steadily creeping influence within New York politics that set him apart from previous bosses.

For the previous 80 years, Tammany Hall had dominated the Democratic Party in New York and enriched its political bosses through graft and the spoils system. All that changed when reformer Fiorello La Guardia took office as New York's mayor in 1933. Denied the revenue that flowed from its patronage scheme, the politicians in Tammany Hall turned to Frank Costello for help.

The link between the Mob and Tammany Hall actually strengthened during La Guardia's three terms, as Costello stepped into the financial breach and provided the funds for multiple elections on behalf of Tammany Hall. As a result, a generation of judges and politicians owed allegiance not to the people of New York but to Frank Costello. In contemporary accounts, he is nicknamed the "Prime Minister of the Underworld."

Costello's influence in New York politics came into clearer light in the summer of 1943 when the *New York Times* reported that he selected the Democratic nominee for New York State Supreme Court justice, Thomas A. Aurelio. The morning after securing the nomination, Aurelio called Costello on his unlisted home number. (Unbeknownst to both men, Costello's phone was tapped.) The transcript of that call records Costello as saying, "When I tell you something is in the bag, you can rest assured." Aurelio then professed his gratitude and pledged, "I want to assure you of my loyalty for all you have done. It's undying."

Publicly, the leaders of Tammany Hall were shocked—shocked!—that Frank Costello was anything but an upright businessman. After much legal wrangling, however, Thomas Aurelio won election to the bench of the State Supreme Court and Frank Costello remained the force behind the Democratic Party of New York for another 10 years.

The smooth ascension of Frank Costello to the head of the Commission supported Luciano's thesis.

CLAIMING HE HAD RETIRED, Frank Costello, opposite, relaxed in his New York office in 1949. Two years later, fellow mobster Joe Adonis watched Costello's nervous hands as he testified before the Senate's Kefauver Committee.

MOST INVESTIGATIONS LOOKING INTO ORGAnized crime stemmed from local authorities, as the FBI offered little or no assistance during this, the Mafia's heyday. A number of theories abound to explain J. Edgar Hoover's reluctance, but historian Thomas Reppetto offers a persuasive explanation in his book *American Mafia*.

Hoover built the reputation of the FBI through its success in bringing to justice a generation of bank robbers and kidnappers. Although these exploits were not without some controversy, Hoover sold the image of his agents as professional and incorruptible. The focus on bank robberies and kidnapping allowed him to cite impressive statistics when lobbying Congress for funds each year. In Reppetto's thinking, Hoover shied away from investigating the more complex issue of organized crime for fear of lowering his success rate.

In a related concern, Hoover recognized that many of the politicians responsible for the FBI's budget owed their positions to organized crime. Campaign donations came from numerous sources, particularly in big cities where political machines decided elections. By shying away from asking tough questions, Hoover was protecting the FBI's bottom line.

Publicly, Hoover pointed to the fact that racketeering and vice were local problems best dealt with by local municipalities. Of course, as Reppetto observes, Hoover was not always consistent in this line of thinking. For example, the FBI helped investigate the Ku Klux Klan despite its being a local issue. Whatever Hoover's true reasons, the result was that the FBI remained on the sidelines until two events in the 1950s forced Hoover's hand.

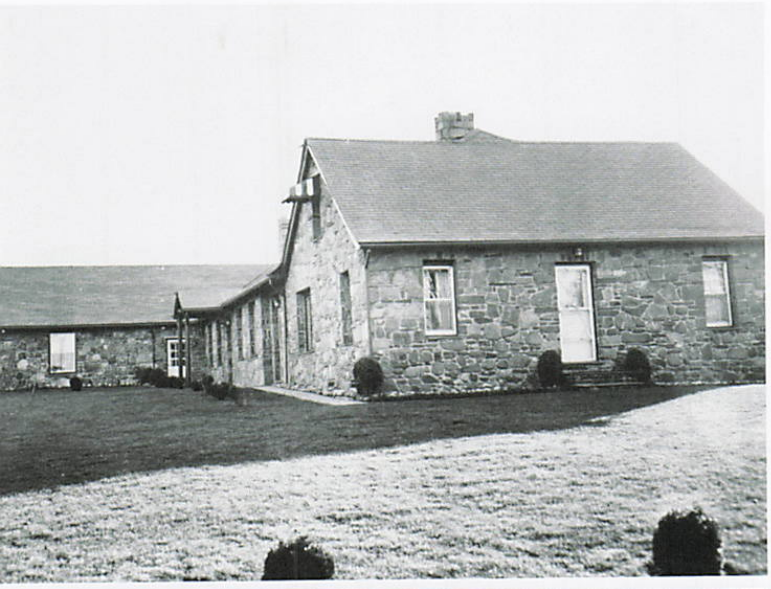
In the void left by the federal government were a series

of local efforts to investigate organized crime. Chicago, Miami and California all created their own crime commissions to look into the roots of the problem. Those commissions, in turn, began to press the federal government for help in dealing with a problem far too large for any one local jurisdiction. These pleas found a receptive ear in the form of the junior senator from Tennessee.

Much like Thomas Dewey, Estes Kefauver was an ambitious politician with dreams of the White House. In Kefauver's view, investigating organized crime might provide a national platform from which to launch his career. Despite Kefauver's party affiliation, the Republicans in the Senate supported his efforts. They hoped any weakening of the Mafia would in turn weaken the power of the Democratic political machines in the cities.

Kefauver's goal to form an investigative committee would likely have died in the Democrat-controlled Senate were it not for the assassination of Kansas City mobster Charles Binaggio and his bodyguard inside a Democratic Party clubhouse. Within days of the killings, Republicans were linking the murders to President Truman and calling for action. The *New York Times* quoted one Republican as stating, "Binaggio and his henchman were killed beneath the portrait of President Truman in the Kansas City Democratic headquarters. When gangland murder touches associates of the White House, it is certainly time for action." President Truman and the Democrats in Congress recognized that this problem required a forceful response and authorized Kefauver's proposed investigation.

The highlight of the Kefauver Committee occurred in March 1951. After nearly a year of crisscrossing the country, the hearings arrived in New York. The front page of the *New York Times* declared, SENATE CRIME HUNT OPENS TODAY WITH TV BROADCAST. The impact of the television cameras would not make itself completely known until



ALBERT ANASTASIA'S gunned-down body in a New York City barbershop, 1957, opposite. The following month, crime bosses gathered in upstate Apalachin, N.Y., to discuss Mob leadership.

the committee called to testify that boss of bosses, Frank Costello.

Unlike other underworld figures called before Kefauver, Costello agreed to testify, mistaken in his belief that he might control the outcome. To make matters worse, Costello refused to allow his face to be shown on television, but he agreed to let the cameras zoom in on his hands during the questioning. As a result, an estimated 20 million Americans witnessed as the cameras hid the identity of the speaker but focused on the twisting and squirming hands of Frank Costello. Those hands became, in Selwyn Raab's words, "the frightening symbol of an otherwise unseen criminal empire."

In the end, the impact of the Kefauver Committee lay in its depiction of organized crime as a national phenomenon and the way it brought the Mafia back to the forefront of the public's attention. The report issued by the committee was by no means exhaustive, however. As is pointed out in *Five Families*, Senator Kefauver conveniently managed to keep the committee from investigating the gambling rackets in his home state of Tennessee.

IF THE PRECEDING 20 YEARS OF THE FIVE FAMIlies were a time of stability, the 1950s proved a study in chaos. After years of restraint, the Mafia witnessed a return to a bloody, earlier era as individuals vied for control of the various crime families. Beginning in 1951, bosses were assassinated, witnesses were killed, and the Five Families experienced an erosion of political influence.

Things reached a nadir during a six-month period in 1957 when the turmoil claimed the lives of two big names in the Mafia, Frank Scalise and Albert Anastasia, as well as a botched hit on Frank Costello himself. A shaken Costello retired and ceded control of the Luciano crime family (and his place atop the Five Families) to the man responsible for his brush with death: Vito Genovese.

When the bullets stopped flying, Genovese stood as the de facto leader of the American Mafia. In an attempt to restore calm and reinforce his position within the Commission, Genovese called for a meeting with the leaders of the other families. Under normal circumstances, the Commission met every five years to talk business, with the latest meeting taking place in 1956. Calling another meeting in quick succession was risky and unprecedented, but Genovese insisted.

It wasn't a great idea. "A strange gathering took place on Nov. 14 at a $100,000 hilltop mansion in the rural hamlet of Apalachin, N.Y.," was how the *New York Times* described the event. In the end, 60 people were apprehended for questioning.

Although no criminal charges were brought in connection with the Apalachin meeting, the long-term effect of the gathering was significant. Even more than the findings of the Kefauver Committee, the breakup of the Apalachin meeting forced the federal government, in particular Hoover and the FBI, to face reality. Organized crime existed on a national level and required a commensurate response. The embarrassment felt by the FBI in the wake of the Apalachin meeting spurred the entire government to action. If the first half of the 20th century marked a "golden age" for organized crime, the second act would not be so kind.

Secrets of the Cosa Nostra

For centuries before the Mafia came to America, Cosa Nostra thrived overseas—and it continues to do so today. BY NANCY LAMBERT

The name for the Sicilian Mafia, Cosa Nostra, means "our thing" when translated literally, but the phrase has developed a much deeper subtext. For members, Cosa Nostra is a way of life, an ideology and an identity.

Though Sicilian-American mobsters who immigrated to the U.S. continued to refer to themselves as Cosa Nostra, the FBI added the "La" in the 1960s, differentiating the American Mafia (La Cosa Nostra, or simply "LCN") from Sicilian Mafias (Cosa Nostra). The Sicilian Mafia is also separate from its counterparts in Naples (the Camorra), Calabria (the 'Ndrangheta) and Puglia (Sacra Corona Unita).

Cosa Nostra developed out of necessity—for centuries, Sicily was a crossroads of many lucrative trade routes and between various warring and exploring factions. Sicilians regularly had to defend their families and their land against invaders, as well as homegrown bandits and thieves, leaving the locals extremely wary of outsiders. For survival, many Sicilians formed groups called "families" or "cosche"; these were the roots of Cosa Nostra.

Because the Mafia was brought to America in part by Sicilian immigrants, the family hierarchies are similar: up top, there is a boss, an underboss and usually an adviser (a "consigliere") who is supposed to advise the boss, be impartial and mediate disputes. Unlike the American Mafia, which allows entry for men of any Italian heritage, in Cosa Nostra, only Sicilian men are considered eligible. New "men of honor" traditionally take a blood oath before an assembly of bosses and underbosses, swearing to obey Cosa Nostra's core rules: silence (omertà), loyalty and obedience. The penalty for breaking these rules is often death.

Eventually, Cosa Nostra infiltrated Sicilian politics, law enforcement and the judiciary system. As its power grew, so did the size and scope of its rackets—as well as the bloodshed. Sicilians were terrorized by a series of power struggles and full-on internal wars between Cosa Nostra rivals, which all too often ended in massacres and the slaying of innocent people.

The violence increased as Cosa Nostra became a major player in the global heroin trade, sometimes coordinating with the American Mafia. During the late 1970s and early '80s, Cosa Nostra exported more than $1.5 billion worth of heroin to New York City alone. Around that time, Sicilian magistrates including Giovanni Falcone, Paolo Borsellino and Rocco Chinnici formed an "antimafia pool" in a concerted effort to take down Cosa Nostra.

They cracked open the Mafia's ranks—owing to testimony from informants ("*pentiti*") such as former Mafia boss turned snitch Tommaso Buscetta—and scored numerous convictions. But all three magistrates were later assassinated by the Mafia in separate car-bombing incidents, while Buscetta's relatives were picked off by Cosa Nostra hit men, who, in little more than a decade, killed 33 members of the Buscetta family.

Like its American cousins, the Sicilian Mafia is still making headlines. Cosa Nostra appears to be waging a war on migrants and is engaging in more street violence as its members fight foreign gangsters for dominance and territory. Though it's unclear what the future holds for Cosa Nostra, its dark legacy, both in its home and in America, is far-reaching and long-lasting.

1

VISIBLE VILLAINS

Photos of Mob members and criminals were posted in prisons and police stations by the Italian police.

2

TURNCOAT

The testimony of boss Tommaso Buscetta helped Sicilian officials prosecute more than 350 members of the Mafia.

3

RETALIATION

Italian president Sandro Pertini (third from right) paid his respects to judge Rocco Chinnici and his bodyguards.

4

DETERMINED JURIST

Italian judge Giovanni Falcone (second from left, with bodyguards) oversaw the conviction of hundreds of Sicilian Mafiosi.

5

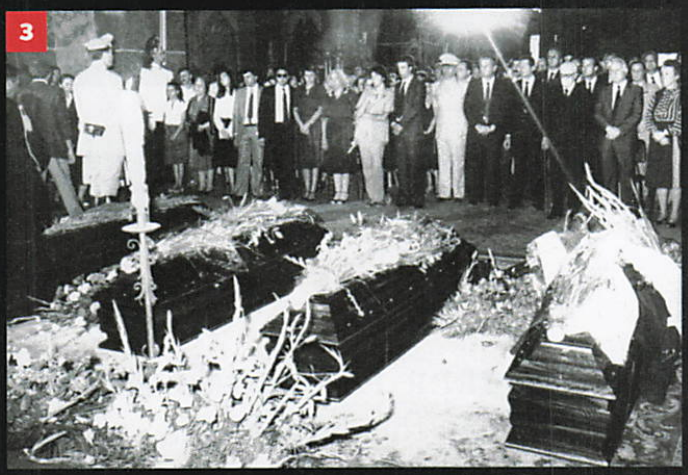
TARGETED

Italian judge Paolo Borsellino was killed in a car bombing soon after the assassination of Giovanni Falcone.

ANTONINO LEONE
ucciso in conflitto
Vincenzo Capraro
Di Pasquale
BRIGANTI

1

2



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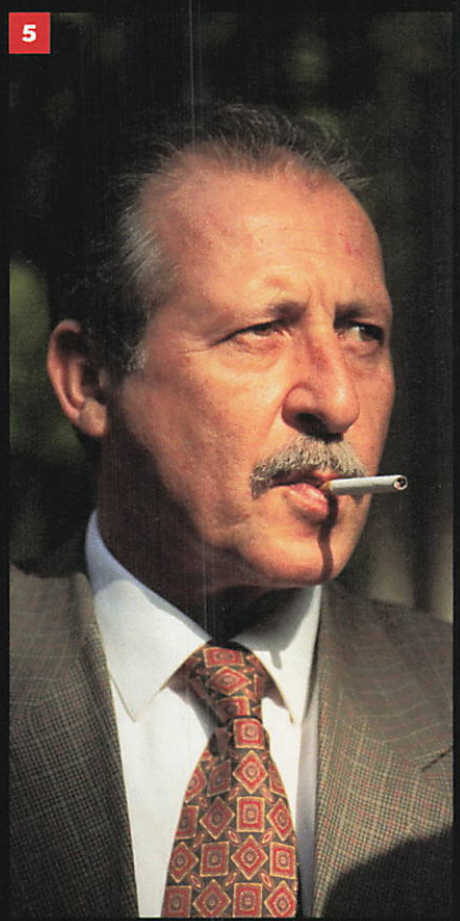


5

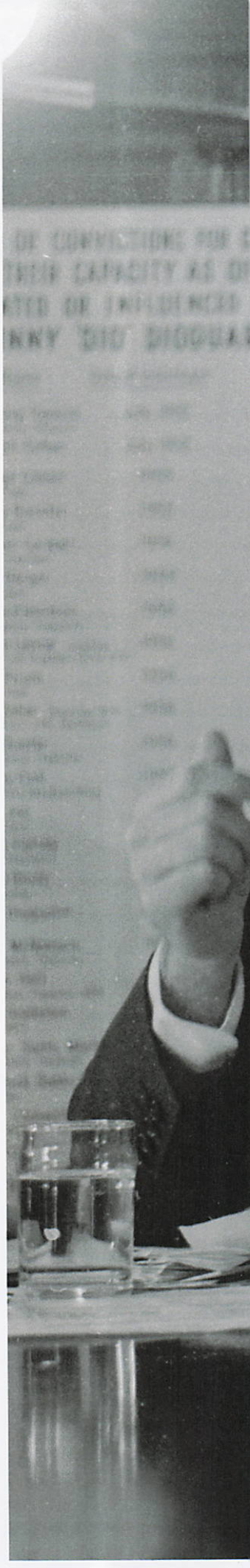
FORCED INTO THE SPOTLIGHT

1957–1970

BY CATHY SCOTT

IN NOVEMBER 1957, MORE THAN 100 TOP AMERICAN Mafiosi from the largest U.S. crime families, as well as high-level representatives from Cuba, converged upon the rural hilltop estate of "Joe the Barber" for a national summit meeting in sleepy Apalachin, N.Y. La Cosa Nostra was not expecting Sergeant Edgar Croswell of the New York State Police to also attend.

It was a risky location for such a high-profile meeting: Joseph Barbara Sr., a suspect (but never charged) in three murders, was often under surveillance. But it wasn't *that* risky. After all, it was far away from major police centers, burrowed in a remote mountain region that bordered Pennsylvania and was 220 miles from New York City. No one expected a raid in the sleepy upstate town. A string of bad luck for Barbara and careful police work led Sergeant Croswell to overhear Barbara's son reserving a block of rooms at the local motel and, from there, discover the Barbaras' order of more than 200 pounds of steak from the local butcher. Croswell, another trooper and two ATF agents the went to check out the quarry-stone mansion, and they observed dozens of Cadillacs,



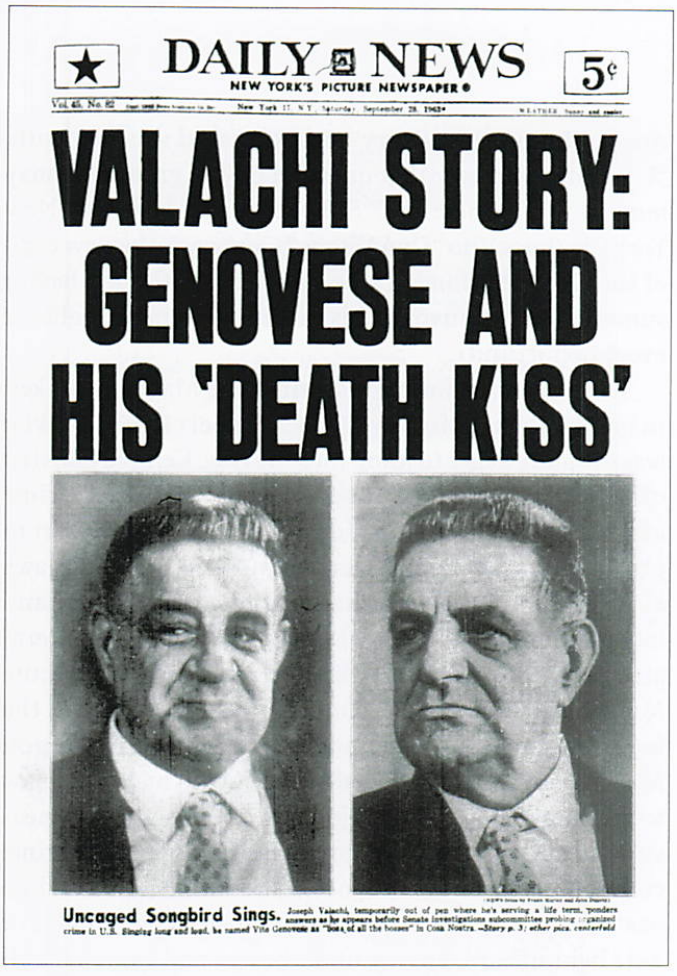
CHIEF COUNSEL ROBERT Kennedy, left, grilled James Hoffa during hearings investigating labor-crime ties as his brother, Senator John Kennedy, listened.

LOCAL 224
LOCAL 227

Lincolns and other luxury sedans parked on the rural road. Croswell then set up a roadblock and radioed for backup. Once they spotted law enforcement, the gangsters scattered, in the rain, like mice across a field, toward pine trees as Croswell and his team chased and rounded them up.

The detainment of 58 top Mafia gangsters during the raid took everyone by surprise, including the mobsters. They had arrived at the summit's location dressed in pricey dark silk suits, polished Italian shoes and white fedoras—and now many of them were wearing those getups in jail. Croswell told reporters who covered the fiasco, "One by one we rounded them up, bedraggled, soaking wet and tired." He added, "There are no sidewalks in the woods."

Before that day, to most of the world, the existence of the American Mafia was largely unknown, as members kept low profiles. But the raid at Apalachin placed them squarely in the headlines and initiated immediate, massive changes in the way the FBI investigated organized crime. Within days, FBI field offices around the country



DAILY NEWS
NEW YORK'S PICTURE NEWSPAPER
5¢

VALACHI STORY: GENOVESE AND HIS 'DEATH KISS'

Uncaged Songbird Sings. Joseph Valachi, temporarily out of pen where he's serving a life term, ponders crime in U.S. Singing long and loud, he named Vito Genovese as "boss of all the bosses" in Cosa Nostra. —Story p. 3; other pics, centerfold

JOSEPH VALACHI, ON TV at left, admitted the existence of the Mafia to the Senate. The following day the *Daily News* reported, "Uncaged Songbird Sings."

enlisted agents to gather intelligence on major racketeers, starting with the summit's attendees.

With evidence from the Apalachin summit in hand (and dozens of suspected Mafia bosses in custody), FBI director J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI had no choice: they publicly acknowledged the expansive, national reach of the underworld. Their first step was to intensify their national Top Hoodlum Program, begun just four years earlier. To scrutinize the top racketeers, the FBI asked its field offices to gather information on gangsters' activities and report to Washington. The result was a centralized intelligence collection on racketeers designed to better understand organized crime. Agents soon learned that illicit activities included bookmaking, prostitution, political influence and illegal gambling enterprises in cities and towns across the U.S. The program marked the first time the FBI used intelligence as a first step to try to stop the Mafia.

The U.S. Senate helped a little. Between 1957 and 1960, a select committee looked into union corruption and racketeering. Headed by Arkansas senator John McClellan, with Robert Kennedy as chief justice, the committee subpoenaed three union officers who had attended the Apalachin meeting—James Da Luca, Louis Larasso and Rosario Mancuso—to testify as to their knowledge of the American Mafia's operation. Unfortunately, their testimony was unhelpful: besides giving their names and addresses, each time the men were asked a question, they pleaded the Fifth. They refused to even say whether they were Mafia associates or even if they had been at the

Apalachin meeting. Every question asked was met with, "I decline to answer that question on the grounds it may tend to incriminate me." Subpoenaed as well was New York City boss Vito "Don Vitone" Genovese, the new capo of the Genovese family, who had ordered the Apalachin summit. He, too, invoked his Fifth Amendment rights at every opportunity.

The second major move against the Mafia was taken in 1961 by then–Attorney General Robert Kennedy, who was far more eager to jump into the fray. Kennedy dusted off the Department of Justice's 1954 Organized Crime and Racketeering Section, designed as a major effort to prosecute racketeers by improving and utilizing laws already on the books. Challenging Mafia bosses and labor-union leaders alike, Kennedy handpicked federal attorneys to guide investigations and help prosecute Mafia outfits around the country. He encouraged all the federal branches to coordinate intelligence-gathering on Mafiosi, and he encouraged Hoover, who had been slow to investigate the Mafia, to join the offensive. These measures resulted in a sharp increase in organized-crime convictions, from 45 in 1960 to 546 in 1964. Still, while vastly improved, the convictions failed to put anyone of note behind bars. Bosses, underbosses and associates all maintained low profiles, ensuring that they were never directly connected to their operations.

Coupled with the earlier suspension of the Kefauver Committee's work, organized crime continued to thrive, mostly unabated. Mafiosi used their long-honed corruption techniques, giving payoffs to public officials and then intimidating and bribing jurors once on trial to avoid convictions. The battle against organized crime was effectively stalled.

ENTER JOSEPH "JOE CARGO" VALACHI, A 30-YEAR career foot soldier in the New York City–based Genovese family. In 1963, Valachi, while serving time on a narcotics conviction in Atlanta, handed the FBI its first big break. He explained to FBI agents that longtime boss Genovese had given him the "kiss of death." Valachi's stretch in prison, originally to be just a few years, had been increased to a death sentence when he had murdered a fellow inmate whom he believed had been sent from Genovese.

Valachi had nothing to lose. He offered to cooperate with the U.S. government and provide the FBI with detailed information about the Mafia—that is, if they would give him a life sentence and promise protection while in prison.

Valachi offered to cooperate with the U.S. government and provide the FBI with detailed information about the Mafia.

The government was happy to agree. And so, in September and October 1963, Valachi stood before the U.S. Senate's Committee on Government Operations and swore to tell the whole truth. He held up his end of the bargain, going on to air as much of the family's dirty laundry as he had to share.

His testimony definitively confirmed the existence of the Mafia, something the Kefauver Committee's 1953 hearings had never been able to prove—that, yes, a Sicilian-Italian organization built on family ties controlled an elaborate organized-crime conspiracy in the U.S.

Valachi's televised testimony shared previously unknown details about the Mafia network, which included the American Mafia's true name, La Cosa Nostra, an appellation that the FBI soon adopted. He provided information about the Mafia's history and its reach, where it operated and where its profits were made. He named names, including "made" (inducted) members of the prominent crime families, and detailed how they obtained their wealth and power. Many of those underworld players turned out to be well-regarded members of their communities who melded seamlessly into their neighborhoods.

The most valuable information that Valachi provided was details on unsolved acts of violence, including murders and drug-trafficking crimes. Law enforcement began to pursue convictions for hundreds of open cases. Robert Kennedy called Valachi's testimony "the biggest single intelligence breakthrough yet in combating organized crime and racketeering in the United States." His public testimony, which was printed in newspapers and broadcast across radio and television networks, was devastating for the secrecy and agency of La Cosa Nostra. Valachi's testimony had cemented him as the FBI's first major turncoat, and in the process, he committed the Mafia's ultimate sin: breaking the code of omertà.

"What Valachi did was beyond measure," William Hundley, former chief of the U.S. Department of Justice's Organized Crime and Racketeering Section, told Peter

EVIDENCE IN THE 1960 TRIAL of Tony Accardo—nicknamed Joe Batters for his murderous swing—is wheeled into a Chicago court. Accardo was found guilty of tax evasion but was acquitted on appeal.

Mass, author of Valachi's 1968 biography. "Before him we had no concrete evidence that anything like the Cosa Nostra existed. In the past, we've heard that so-and-so was a syndicate man, and that was about all. But Valachi named names. He revealed what the structure was and how it operates. In a word, he showed us the face of the enemy."

It was a historic moment. Armed with Valachi's information, the FBI eventually released a history of La Cosa Nostra to law-enforcement agencies around the U.S. Things would get even worse for the Mafia—and better for the FBI—but not overnight.

The government could penalize suspects by seizing ill-gotten property, hitting La Cosa Nostra in the pocketbook.

Unfortunately, even though Valachi's testimony was heavily detailed, no indictments were made. That was in part because gangsters used tried and true ways to avoid prosecution altogether, such as fleeing the country, hiring pricey attorneys to file motions to fight going to trial, and tampering with juries. Overseas, these techniques were already in use, especially evident in the late 1960s during what became known as the Sicilian Mafia trials. Three major trials included dozens of defendants and ended in mostly acquittals. As with the American trials, although local police and federal agents were able to garner enough evidence to arrest and charge the suspects, the accusations simply did not stick.

IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE RASH OF MAFIOSO acquittals, federal lawmakers sought to aid the FBI's battle against Mafia influence with legislation. Congress passed the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act in 1968, which provided for the use of court-ordered electronic surveillance—including wiretapping. Intended to "assist state and local governments in strengthening and improving law enforcement at all levels of government," it also meant federal agents could demand help from local

THE ITALIAN-AMERICAN Civil Rights League, opposite, and protesters, right, resented their portrayal. Their cause was not helped by the speeches of mobster Joseph Colombo, above.

law enforcement and police when searching for La Cosa Nostra.

Of course, the Mafia paid close attention to the changing laws, and the act was quickly rendered ineffective. Because the FBI's wiretaps were placed everywhere—in the Mafia's businesses, in restaurants they frequented and even in their homes—the word circulated for Mafioso associates to keep low profiles. When talking about their rackets, they simply walked outside so their conversations could not be picked up by wiretaps.

The next act of legislation had far more of a bite. Drafted by G. Robert Blakey, a special attorney for the government, the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act of 1970 was signed into law by President Nixon. The sweeping legislation allowed prosecutors to pursue Mafia associates and anyone else violating RICO laws, giving federal agents the legal right to target bosses for crimes committed by their underlings.

"Before the act, the government's efforts were necessarily piecemeal, attacking isolated segments of the organization as they engaged in single criminal acts," explained Blakey in *St. John's Law Review*. "The leaders, when caught, were only penalized for what seemed to be unimportant crimes. The larger meaning of these crimes was lost because the big picture [of La Cosa Nostra] could not be presented in a single criminal prosecution."

RICO included hefty penalties and sentences and allowed government agencies to "attack criminal enterprises," according to *Congressional Quarterly*. It provided extended criminal and civil penalties for racketeering activity performed as part of an ongoing criminal enterprise. Violation of the act was punishable by up to 20 years in prison (unless the charge included murder, in which case it could be a life sentence) and a maximum of $250,000 in fines per count or twice the value of profits obtained by illegal means.

RICO also gave the government the right to confiscate property: land, houses, automobiles, boats, jewelry and cash. Through its forfeiture clause, if assets were obtained while the perpetrator violated the act, then the government could penalize suspects by seizing their ill-gotten property. Hitting La Cosa Nostra in the pocketbook while attacking its criminal activities (such as arson, counterfeiting and extortion) fell squarely under the RICO Act.

With high hopes from lawmakers, the FBI and government officials, the RICO Act was passed into law in October 1970. It became the star feature of President Nixon's crime bill. As the head of the Senate's racketeering-investigations committee, McClellan was determined to reverse La Cosa Nostra's trend of avoiding prosecution and instead increase federal indictments of hoodlums. RICO would prove to be a powerful tool to take down Mafiosi because, according to *Congressional Quarterly*, it allowed the government to "attack criminal enterprises on a broad front, stripping them of their leadership and sources of both illicit and legitimate revenue in one massive prosecution." Law enforcement finally had a weapon it could use against the Mafia.

Tall Tales

There are many common misconceptions about the Mafia. Some are half-truths blown out of proportion, while others are pure fiction propagated by the glut of Mob media. Geoff Schumacher, the senior director of content at the Mob Museum in Las Vegas, helps debunk some of the Mafia's tallest tales and most pervasive myths. BY NANCY LAMBERT

1

Mafiosi must obey the code of omertà ("code of silence")

Any adherence to omertà seems to have ended during La Cosa Nostra's early days. Once the feds started turning up the heat mid-century—beginning with the Joe Valachi hearings in 1963—mobsters suddenly had a lot more to say. "Members of crime families often served as secret informants and snitches for law enforcement when they wanted to avoid going to prison," Schumacher says. "The culture changed in such a way that going to prison was no longer a badge of honor for these guys." Since Valachi, many mobsters have gone on the record, including former boss Joe Bonanno, who wrote a tell-all autobiography in 1983.

2

Eliot Ness brought down Al Capone

Schumacher puts the blame squarely on the media for this one. "The story of Eliot Ness has been greatly exaggerated, first by the journalist who helped him write his memoir and second by the TV series and movie *The Untouchables*." Schumacher notes that although Ness was certainly a thorn in Capone's side, disrupting his bootlegging operations, "he had almost nothing to do with Capone's conviction and 11-year prison sentence." The real hero in Capone's downfall was the IRS. "Capone was convicted of tax evasion, based on an extensive case built by a special intelligence unit within the Treasury department," Schumacher says, adding, "This unit, headed by Elmer Irey, also brought down other crime bosses for evading taxes."

3

Severed horse heads are used to deliver warnings

Mario Puzo's *The Godfather* spawned this pop-culture favorite. Though Francis Ford Coppola used a real horse head while filming the famous scene (from a slaughterhouse, if that makes it any easier to bear), there's no evidence that any actual Mafiosi ever used one to threaten an enemy. Since the film, however, there have been several copycat incidents. Although there are some anecdotes of dead fish being left as a message, as with the horse heads, most of those documented cases arose after *The Godfather* was published. Speaking of fishes and threats, the phrase "sleeping with the fishes," dates to the 1800s, with roughly the same meaning but no Mafia context. The phrase was all but forgotten until *The Godfather* brought it, now with a connotation as "connected" as any made man.

4

The Mafia are "men of honor"

This one goes back to the Mafia's roots in Sicily, where they are referred to as "The Honored Society." The Mafia has tried to pad its violent criminal behavior with the notion that it operates by some mythic code of honor. The media helped that idea gain traction, often painting Mafiosi as folk heroes. "The Mafia, in particular, has been romanticized by popular culture because of its secret rituals, codes and so forth," Schumacher explains. "But in the end, members of the Mafia were criminals who often resorted to violence to steal people's money and solve disputes. There's nothing glamorous or honorable about what they did."

1

LATE DAILY NEWS 5¢

NEW YORK'S PICTURE NEWSPAPER

VALACHI PINS AUGIE'S RUBOUT ON GENOVESE

The Tenor of Things.

3 Pages of Former Mirror Comics & Features — 51, 52, 53.

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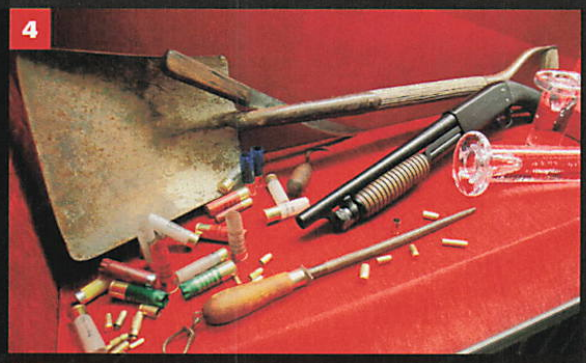

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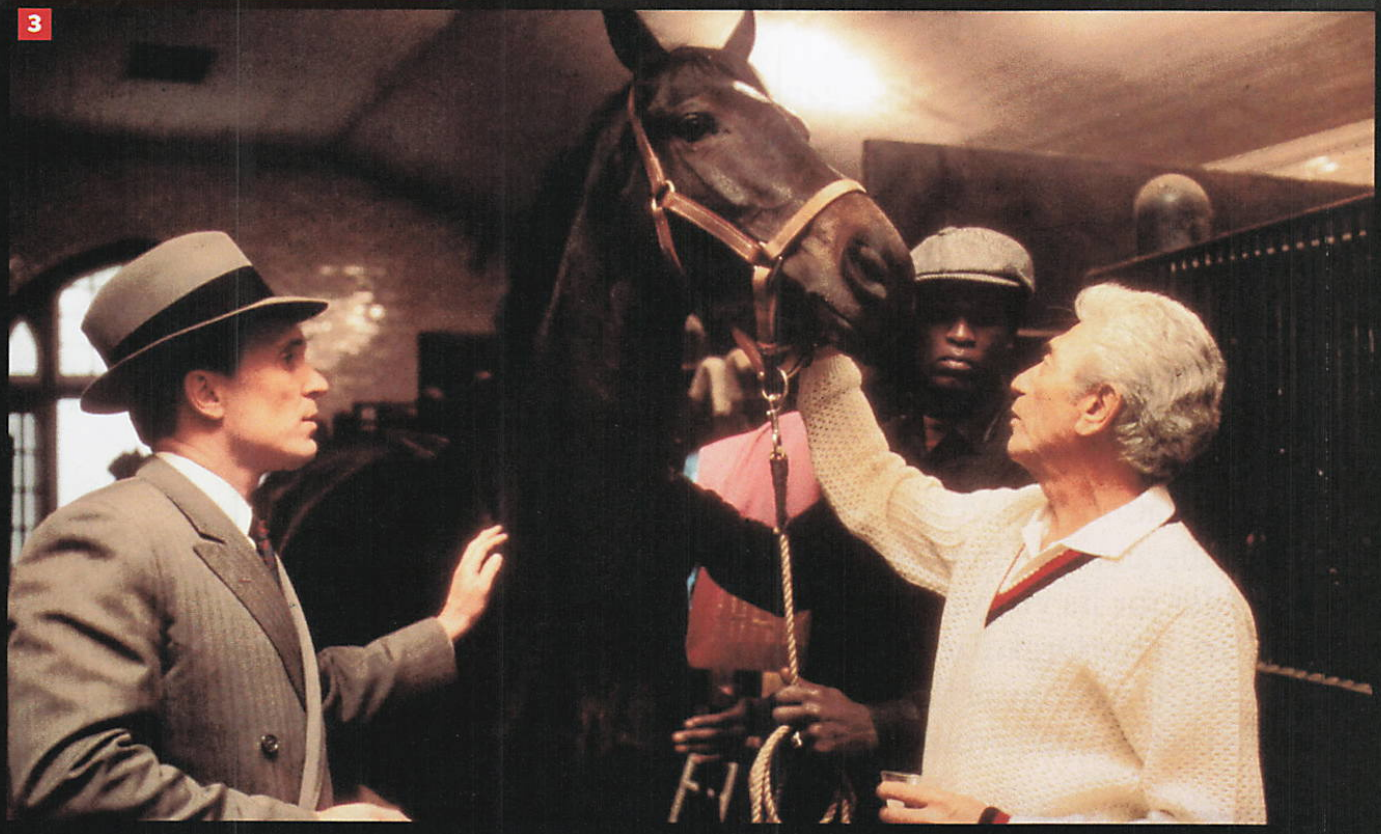


THE DEATH OF OMERTÀ

1970–2001

BY GEORGE ANASTASIA

THE FACE OF THE AMERICAN MAFIA WAS CHANGING. Men of honor, if they ever existed, were part of a dying culture. The Mafia may once have been a way of life for a small group of immigrant Italians and first-generation Italian Americans, but by the 1970s, for many second- and third-generation members of that ethnic subset, the Mafia had become merely a way to make money.

When those profit-seeking gangsters found themselves jammed up and facing a criminal prosecution that could carry a 20-year-to-life sentence, they acted accordingly. Honoring omertà—and the blood oath of allegiance they had sworn to uphold when formally initiated into the secret society—was not part of the equation. The Mafia had moved away from being a way of life, and a criminal indictment required a business decision. For many mobsters, the question they asked themselves was "How do I cut my losses?"

The legislation passed in Congress in 1970, the RICO Act, provided the answer—but it took nearly two decades for its vision to be fully realized. Part of the Organized Crime Control Act, RICO was one of the most effective tools ever handed prosecutors in the

JOHN GOTTI CHALLENGED boss Paul Castellano's leadership in the Gambino family. It ended with Castellano's public murder at Sparks Steak House.

SPAR
CHRISTMAS
TREES
$25.

war on organized crime, allowing bosses to be prosecuted for the deeds they ordered. A key element in that same piece of legislation provided an out to beleaguered mobsters: the creation of the Witness Security Program. Run by the U.S. Marshals Service, WITSEC, which took effect in 1971, offered a safe haven and a new life to cooperating witnesses, most of them criminals, who chose to take the stand against members of an organization for which they worked. Testifying and disappearing into WITSEC could provide the answer.

Despite high hopes, neither RICO nor WITSEC, which is often incorrectly referred to as the Witness Protection Program, had an immediate impact in the war against the Mafia. Law-enforcement agencies had been building cases against gangsters for years using familiar tactics and strategies. RICO and WITSEC were new, untested tools, and it took considerable time for agencies and prosecutors to realize their value.

THE MAFIA COMMISSION CASE, A SINGLE FEDERAL trial in the Southern District of New York in 1986, targeted the bosses of all five New York Mob families, along with several of their top associates. It ended decisively—an anonymous jury returning guilty verdicts on all counts—and had long-lasting ramifications for La Cosa Nostra.

The trial included a defense strategy in which lawyers for the accused acknowledged the existence both of the Mafia and of a ruling national tribunal (the Commission) set up to settle disputes. Notable at the time as the first instance of a current member of the "secret society"—albeit through attorneys—publicly conceding the organization's existence, the trial also made careers for the attorneys on the bench. The prosecution became a springboard for Rudolph Giuliani, the ambitious U.S.

Electronic surveillance, including wiretaps, room bugs and body wires, had become increasingly sophisticated.

Attorney for the Southern District of New York who went on to build a reputation as a crime buster and later became the mayor of New York. (It's a matter of some debate in law-enforcement circles whether it was Giuliani or Ronald Goldstock, then head of the New York State Organized Crime Task Force, who came up with the idea behind the Mafia Commission prosecution.)

The first key witness to take the stand was Angelo Lonardo, the former underboss of the Mafia in Cleveland, one of a handful of "made," formally initiated, members of the Mafia who cooperated with authorities in the pre–Mafia Commission underworld in the U.S. In the courtroom, he described the workings of the American Mafia and the power and influence of the Commission. His testimony, while devoid of any particulars about the specific crimes listed in the indictment, was nevertheless a primer on the ways of the wiseguy.

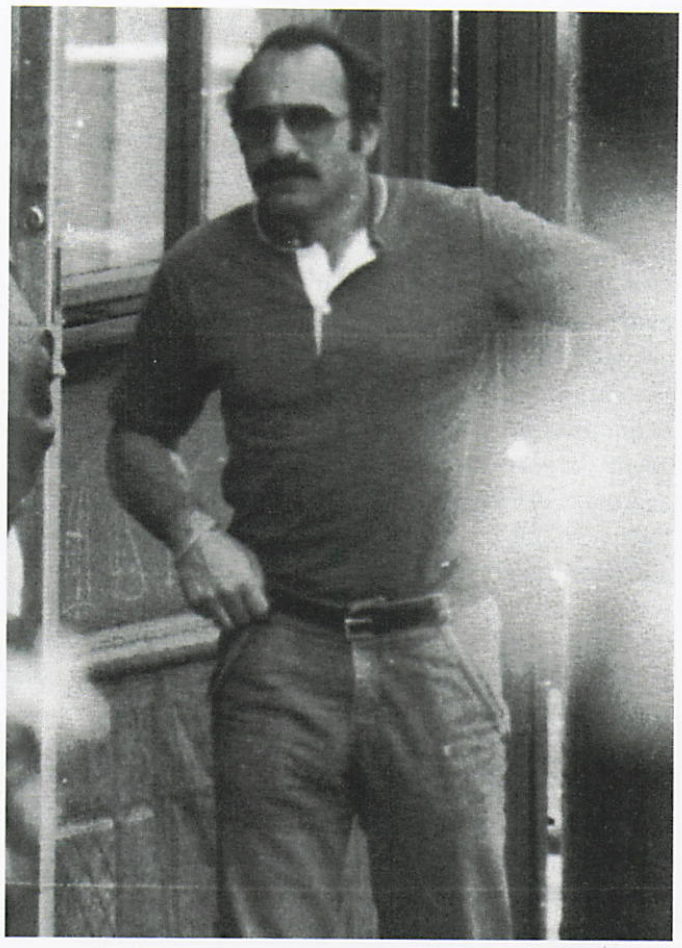
Lonardo followed in the footsteps of Joe Valachi, who testified before a U.S. Senate subcommittee in 1963 and first disclosed that the organization was known as La Cosa Nostra. Others who broke the code of silence included Aladena "Jimmy the Weasel" Frattiano, a Los Angeles Mob leader, and Vincent Teresa, a Boston Mafioso. It was a small, select group. But thanks to WITSEC, it was set to expand significantly.

Also played in court were taped and highly incriminating conversations from listening devices. Electronic surveillance, including wiretaps, room bugs and body wires, had become increasingly sophisticated with each new generation, and law enforcement used the developing technology wisely. Snippets of audio played were from the Staten Island home of Gambino crime-family boss Paul Castellano, from the Mob clubhouse of Anthony "Fat Tony" Salerno (the titular head of the Genovese organization) and from within a Jaguar used by Lucchese crime-family boss Anthony "Tony Ducks" Corallo.

Additionally damning were the tapes and testimony of Joe Pistone, a.k.a. Donnie Brasco, the FBI agent who spent six years working undercover to gather evidence against the Bonanno and Colombo crime families. Pistone, a North Jersey–bred man of Sicilian descent, was a master undercover operative who drew so close to his wiseguy associates that he was months from being proposed for membership when the FBI ended his operation. It was an embarrassing development for the Mob after Pistone's cover was lifted and he took the witness stand. Years later, another FBI agent (Joaquin Garcia, who posed as Jackie Falcone) would infiltrate a crew of the Gambino crime family. He also insinuated himself so well into the organization that he was in line to be formally initiated into the crime family.

Tapes made by both Pistone and Garcia, along with their first-person testimony at numerous trials, ripped to shreds the curtain of secrecy that had once been the American Mafia's first line of defense against prosecution. They also put the lie to the concepts of honor and loyalty that were fostered in books and movies like *The Godfather*, demonstrating instead that nobility in the underworld was a piece of fiction. Reality was hit man Benjamin "Lefty Guns" Ruggiero explaining to his close friend and associate Donnie Brasco that "as a wiseguy you can lie, you can cheat, you can steal, you can kill people legitimately. You can do any goddamn thing you want, and nobody can say

U.S. ATTORNEY RUDOLPH Giuliani, opposite left, went undercover with U.S. Parole Commission chairman Benjamin Baer and Senator Alfonse D'Amato. Genovese boss Anthony Salerno, left, after his 1985 arraignment for racketeering.



anything about it. Who wouldn't wanna be a wiseguy?"

THE DECIMATION OF THE AMERICAN MAFIA MAY have started with the Commission Trial, which lasted 10 weeks and resulted in the convictions of eight defendants. But it was just the beginning.

One of the original defendants, Bonanno crime-family leader Philip "Rusty" Rastelli, had been severed from the case because of other criminal problems. (He was later convicted in a separate trial.) Gambino boss Paul Castellano, on the other hand, wasn't around when his trial began in September 1986. He had been murdered 10 months earlier, gunned down outside Sparks Steak House in midtown Manhattan along with his driver and underboss Tommy Bilotti. The cold-blooded assassinations, set in motion by John Gotti, who assumed the top spot in the Gambino organization, shook the American Mafia to its core.

Gotti, a thug and former truck hijacker, quickly became the public face of the American Mafia. He was the new breed of Mob boss, the celebrity gangster. His portrait by Andy Warhol was on the cover of TIME magazine, and his name appeared in New York tabloid gossip columns almost as often as it did in front-page crime stories, where he earned the nickname "the Teflon Don" because of his ability to beat several cases. His bloody (and incompetent) reign as Mob boss lasted from 1985 until his conviction and imprisonment in 1992—and fueled the ongoing destabilization of the Mafia.

"John Gotti was the don-as-diva," the great New York reporter Jack Newfield once wrote. "He was in love with himself and equated his ego with all of La Cosa Nostra. He was a throwback to the first narcissistic, starstruck hoodlums—Bugsy Siegel and Al Capone, who also didn't understand boundaries and were addicted to publicity."

Gotti wore that mantle well. Always immaculately dressed and impeccably coiffed, he favored expensive suits and highly polished Italian leather footwear. He was the antithesis of his rival, Genovese crime-family boss Vincent "Chin" Gigante, who avoided prosecution for years by walking around Greenwich Village in a ratty bathrobe and slippers, mumbling to himself and pretending to be mentally incompetent.

Gigante, who was finally convicted in 1997, ran a well-oiled and extremely secretive organization in which members were barred from ever mentioning his name or nickname, a defense against what had become widespread fear in the underworld of federal listening devices. In conversation, they instead referred to Gigante by silently pointing to their chin. On a tape, any reference to him would carry no significant meaning and would be worthless in any prosecution.

Gigante, it was said, was crazy, all right—crazy like a fox. He preferred to stay in the shadows, abiding by a simple Mob philosophy that had worked for years: make money, not headlines.

Gotti, on the other hand, was drawn to the spotlight. He loved being center stage and always had a quip or a sound bite for the media, which seemed to track his every move. But along the way, Gotti turned "Our Thing" into "My Thing," establishing a me-first, self-centered approach to running a Mafia family that was eventually adopted by other up-and-coming mobsters in several other cities where the American Mafia had once held sway.

It was the testimony of Gotti's hit-man underboss Salvatore "Sammy the Bull" Gravano that eventually brought Gotti down, assisted in part by secretly recorded conversations from FBI listening devices hidden in an apartment above his Mob clubhouse on Mulberry Street in lower Manhattan. Gravano, who ad-

FBI AGENT JOSEPH PISTONE undercover as Donnie Brasco, top. Vincent Gigante, center at right, feigned insanity to cover up his Mob leadership. The feds arrested him in 1990.

mitted his own involvement in 19 gangland murders, is perhaps the most infamous Mob turncoat in American underworld history. But his decision to cooperate after he, Gotti and a third Gambino leader were indicted in 1990 was part of an ever-growing trend.

NINETY MILES SOUTH OF NEW YORK CITY, THE death of omertà had reached the Philadelphia crime family, which was ripped apart in a series of trials that collectively included the testimony of several Mafiosi, including crime-family underboss Philip Leonetti. Although mobsters taking the stand, breaking omertà and then disappearing into WITSEC had become a recurring thread, Leonetti's defection was highly personal. Not only was he second in command, but he also was the nephew of Nicodemo "Little Nicky" Scarfo, one of the most violent Mob bosses in America.

Virtually every American Mafia family paid a price for the cooperation and testimony of turncoats within their ranks. For example, the Mafia's control of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters' multimillion-dollar Central States Pension and its lucrative skimming operation at several Las Vegas casinos in the 1970s were revealed almost a decade later in cases built around evidence and witness testimony that were the linchpins of the Commission trial. Mob bosses from Chicago, Cleveland, Milwaukee and Kansas City were convicted in cases that included testimony from both Frattiano and Lonardo. The disappearance and suspected murder of former Teamsters president Jimmy Hoffa in 1975, never solved, has also been linked to Mafia control of the powerful union.

In Chicago, Mob bosses and underbosses were jailed in racketeering trials that turned the Outfit, as the Mob is known in the Windy City, inside out. The most infamous was the so-called Family Secrets trial of 2007, in which one Mob member testified against both his father and his uncle.

New York Mob bosses Alphonse "Little Al" D'Arco and Joseph Massino and Philadelphia boss Ralph Natale all turned government witnesses as the prosecutorial onslaught continued.

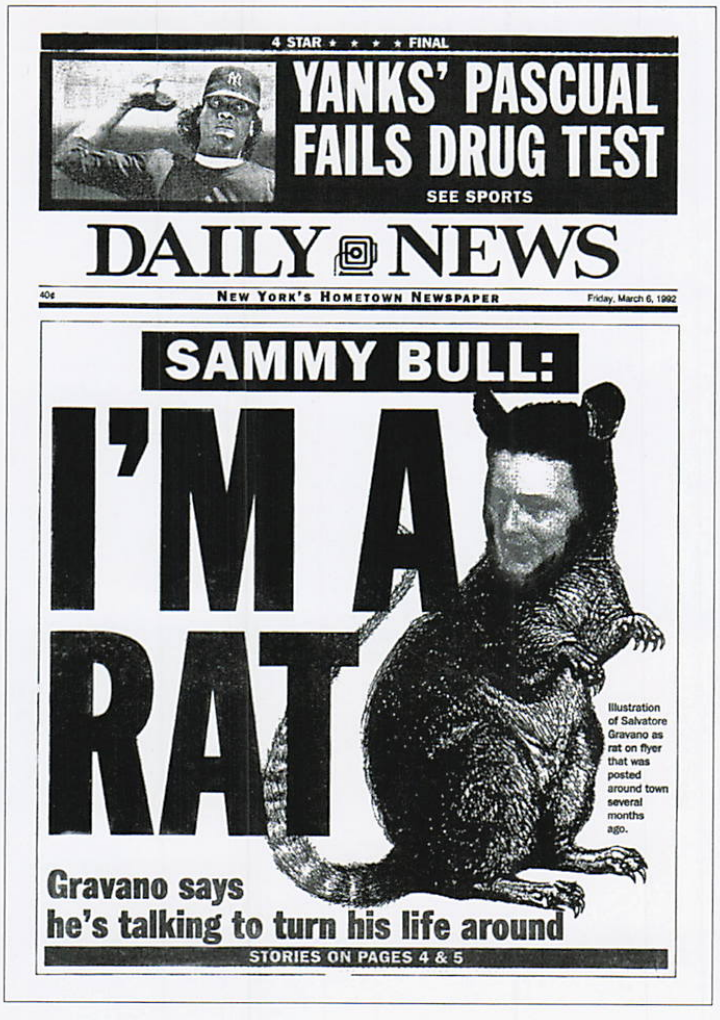
In 1989 the FBI was tipped off about a secret Mafia initiation ceremony and managed to plant listening devices in the home.

The New England crime family was embarrassed even further when in 1989 the FBI was tipped off about a secret Mafia initiation ceremony and managed to plant listening devices in the home where the ceremony was to take place. The recordings were a first: witnesses may have testified about the sacred initiation rite, but this was a tape of the actual event.

A year later, North Jersey Mob informant George Fresolone, working for the New Jersey State Police, wore a body wire to his initiation ceremony into the Philadelphia branch of La Cosa Nostra. His tape and subsequent testimony before a grand jury led to the arrests of 38 Mob members and associates from six different crime families.

Along the way, there were missteps that raised serious questions about an end-justifies-the-means approach to building cases.

Gregory Scarpa, a notorious New York Mob capo nick-



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YANKS' PASCUAL FAILS DRUG TEST

SEE SPORTS

DAILY NEWS

40¢ NEW YORK'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER Friday, March 6, 1992

SAMMY BULL:

I'M A RAT

Illustration of Salvatore Gravano as rat on flyer that was posted around town several months ago.

Gravano says he's talking to turn his life around

STORIES ON PAGES 4 & 5

IN 1990 "SAMMY THE BULL" Gravano and John Gotti leave the Ravenite Social Club, opposite left. Two years later, Gravano testified against Gotti, earning the nickname "Sammy the Rat."

named "the Grim Reaper" because of his long list of suspected murders, was an FBI informant for years—but may have benefited from information provided by his own FBI handlers in a bloody power struggle within the Colombo crime family. Allegations that Scarpa used information provided by the feds to eliminate his rivals cast a shadow over cases and information he provided to the FBI.

In Boston, similar allegations, later backed up by evidence and criminal prosecutions, turned James "Whitey" Bulger into an infamous underworld legend. Bulger, whose life has been the topic of four books and two movies, fed information to his FBI handlers about the operations of the New England Mafia. In exchange, he was tipped off about investigations conducted by other law-enforcement agencies that had made him their primary target.

Witnesses and cooperators in those cases turned up dead. Three FBI agents faced charges for their roles in the Bulger fiasco. Bulger went on the run for nearly 16 years after being tipped off by one of his handlers to his pending indictment. In 2011, Bulger was arrested in Santa Monica, Calif., where he was living with his girlfriend as a quiet senior-citizen retiree, and in 2013 he was convicted of racketeering and murder—and sentenced to life in prison. The case against him was in many ways a postscript to the war on organized crime.

BY THE TURN OF THE CENTURY AND IN THE AFTERmath of the Twin Towers disaster known as 9/11, law enforcement had shifted its focus away from the Mafia and toward more dangerous organizations: international terrorists.

In the weeks immediately following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, a rumor, which later proved to be unfounded, began to circulate that some of the hijackers had been working out of Jersey City, just across the Hudson River from the towers. A reporter visiting the location back then was struck by the fact that if the hijackers had operated from there, they had been hiding in plain sight. Newark Avenue, in the heart of downtown Jersey City, was an ethnic hodgepodge. Along one section of the commercial district, mosques, restaurants, travel agencies, delicatessens and other businesses catered to new immigrants from countries on the other side of the globe. Language, culture and a distrust of outsiders provided a curtain behind which the terrorists could operate in secrecy, much the same way Italian and Jewish criminals a century earlier had flourished in the ethnically closed neighborhoods of lower Manhattan.

The difference, however, was telling. The criminal activities of immigrant and first-generation Italian-American gangsters (and their Jewish confederates) formed the foundation for what would become a monolithic underground syndicate known as the Mafia. Its goal was to corrupt and control politics, the courts, government, legitimate businesses and labor unions and to use that control to line their pockets. Corrupting the system may have been the end game. But success depended on the system functioning. The goal of terrorists is different. Their goal is to destroy the system, which makes those stakes much higher.

It took law enforcement decades to develop the tools—RICO, WITSEC and high-tech electronic surveillance—to bring down the America Mafia. In the war on terrorism, law enforcement doesn't have the luxury of time.

3 A ROGUES' GALLERY

MICKEY COHEN LEANS over a craps table in Nevada in 1949. The flashily dressed mobster ran a legitimate haberdashery and had a habit of throwing away his own suits instead of sending them out to be cleaned.

3

WISEGUYS & MADE MEN

BY DANIEL S. LEVY AND NANCY LAMBERT

MANY COLORFUL CHARACTERS INHABITED THE TWISTED web of the American underworld during the turn of the 20th century, through Prohibition and onward. Some were imports from the Mafia in Sicily; others were petty criminals. All of them plotted, schemed and built reputations for ruthlessness as easily as affecting an amusing nickname. Certainly there were plenty of those: Scarface; Lord High Executioner; Mad Dog; Chin; Joe the Boss.

A useful but fine distinction must be made between wiseguys and made men: the former are gangsters, crooks, racketeers—shady businessmen out to make a buck and not overly worried about the murders they commit on the way. Those in the latter group have sworn allegiance in blood to La Cosa Nostra and are fully initiated members of the Mafia, sworn to the code of omertà (silence). Some wiseguys died long before (or perished during) the Commission's takeover in 1931 and thus missed the dubious opportunity to join one of the Five Families, but they remain notable in their own right. The one thing on which they might all agree? Official code or not, speaking about their rackets might lead to a violent end.

AL CAPONE STANDS IN court in Chicago in 1931. That November, Judge James Wilkerson sentenced him to a then record-breaking decade in prison.

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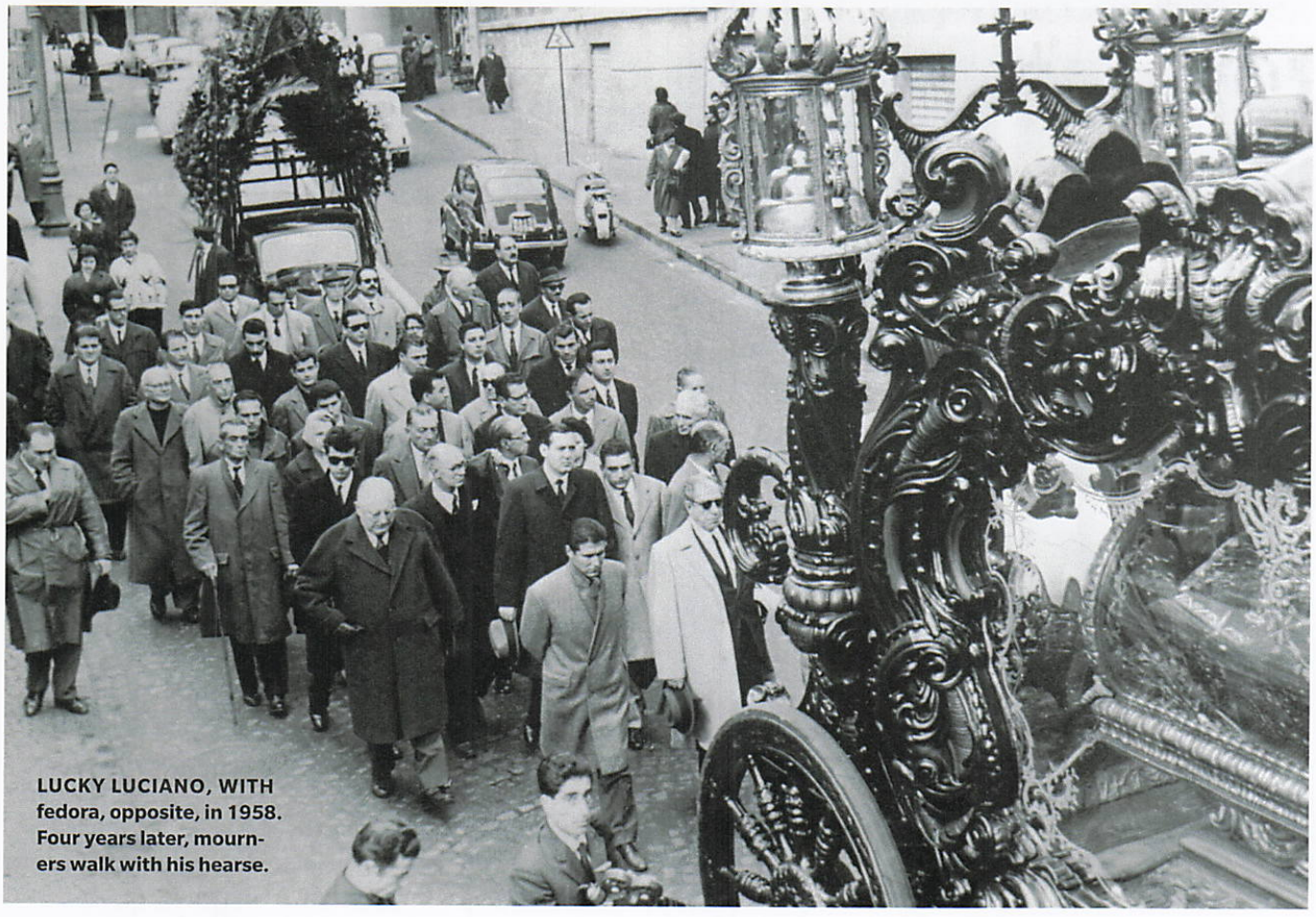
CHARLES "LUCKY" LUCIANO

1897–1962

One of Charles "Lucky" Luciano's luckiest escapes happened in October 1929, when he was abducted by four gangsters for a "one-way ride." They kicked, beat and stabbed him repeatedly and left him on a Staten Island beach to die. Luciano survived. Whether the then–chief lieutenant of Joe Masseria's liquor gang adopted his fortuitous nickname for that incident, or for avoiding prison time despite a high number of arrests, is unclear.

The Sicilian-born mobster killed the less fortunate on his way to success and rose to the head of what would become known as the Genovese family. Luciano kept the structure of the Five Families created by Maranzano and named himself chairman of the board—setting up the first gathering of the national syndicate that became known as the Commission. Bad guys paid fealty at a suite at New York's Waldorf Astoria hotel, and he palled around with celebrities like Frank Sinatra and George Raft.

Eventually, Lucky's luck ran out. His success and accolades drew attention, particularly from prosecutor Thomas Dewey, who started looking into Luciano's extortion and brothel empire and called him "the czar of organized crime in this city." A court convicted Luciano in 1936 of 62 counts of compulsory prostitution and sentenced him to 30 to 50 years. During World War II, though, Lucky lucked out again: U.S. Naval Intelligence needed to ensure that the Italian immigrant dockworkers in New York were resistant to suspected Nazi sabotage. They convinced the prison-bound Luciano to use his influence to guarantee that the dockworkers would oblige. Despite his show of patriotism, the government deported him to Italy after the war, where he died in 1962 of a heart attack in Naples.



LUCKY LUCIANO, WITH fedora, opposite, in 1958. Four years later, mourners walk with his hearse.

JOHNSON, right, during his 1941 trial

ENOCH "NUCKY" JOHNSON

1883–1968

With his $1,200 raccoon coat, red carnation and chauffeur-driven, powder-blue limousine, Nucky Johnson cut quite a figure in Prohibition-era Atlantic City, N.J. But then, Atlantic City essentially ignored the national booze ban, which allowed the nattily dressed kingpin to make a hefty $500,000 a year from the seaside community's liquor parlors and houses of prostitution, according to investigators. "We have whiskey, wine, women, song and slot machines. I won't deny it and I won't apologize for it," Johnson boasted about his hometown. Unlike Johnson's fictional counterpart on the show *Boardwalk Empire*, the *New York Times* noted of him in 2014: "His power was such that he never needed violence to get his way." Yet flaunting this power had its downsides, and the feds finally caught up with him in 1939, slapping him with a 10-year sentence for tax evasion.

A MASSERIA mug shot.

GIUSEPPE "JOE THE BOSS" MASSERIA

1887–1931

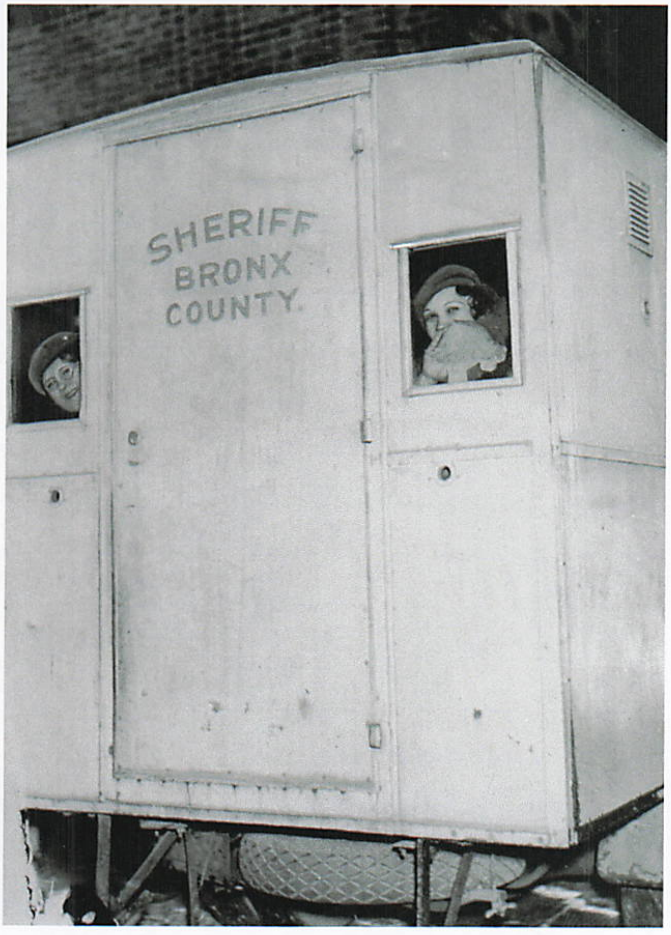
Joe Masseria's steel-armored sedan didn't do him much good on April 15, 1931. The Sicilian-born gangster—who as a New York teen worked with like-minded killers and extortionists, and by 1920 had started to consolidate the city's Italian-run rackets—parked that car in a Coney Island garage and walked to a seafood restaurant where he met with Lucky Luciano. The men ate and played cards. Yet Masseria wasn't aware that his underboss had just sworn allegiance to Salvatore Maranzano, with whom Masseria was engaged in a gang war over gambling, liquor and prostitution rackets. Soon Luciano said he needed to go to the bathroom. As he did, four gunmen (there is speculation over precisely who, but Vito Genovese, Bugsy Siegel, Joe Adonis and Albert Anastasia have been considered) reportedly whisked in and shot the crime boss five times. Masseria tumbled to the bloodied floor, an inglorious exit for the man whom a detective deemed "bigger than Al Capone."

COLL'S BODY IS CARRIED away in 1932. In 1934, his widow, Lottie, below, was locked up for manslaughter.

VINCENT "MAD DOG" COLL

1908–1932

Even as a youngster, Vincent Coll proved uncontrollable. Kicked out of a Catholic orphanage, he soon after worked for Dutch Schultz's lucrative New York loan-sharking and bootleg business. Coll proved an eager and brutal enforcer. But the Irish-born wiseguy had larger ambitions, and he tried to wrestle territory for himself by hijacking his boss's beer trucks, going to war with other gangsters, kidnapping club owners and robbing a dairy. In July 1931, Coll's crew nabbed George "Big Frenchy" DeMange, a member of the Owney Madden gang. Later in the month, Coll earned the nickname "Mad Dog" when a snatch attempt on a Schultz underling led to the death of a 5-year-old. For several months, Coll hid out in a hotel to evade the police and Schultz. It all went south when he headed to London Chemists, a pharmacy where he was rumored to be demanding $50,000 from Madden, under a threat of kidnapping. After Coll stepped into a phone booth, a gangster entered the shop carrying a tommy gun and riddled Coll with at least 10 slugs.



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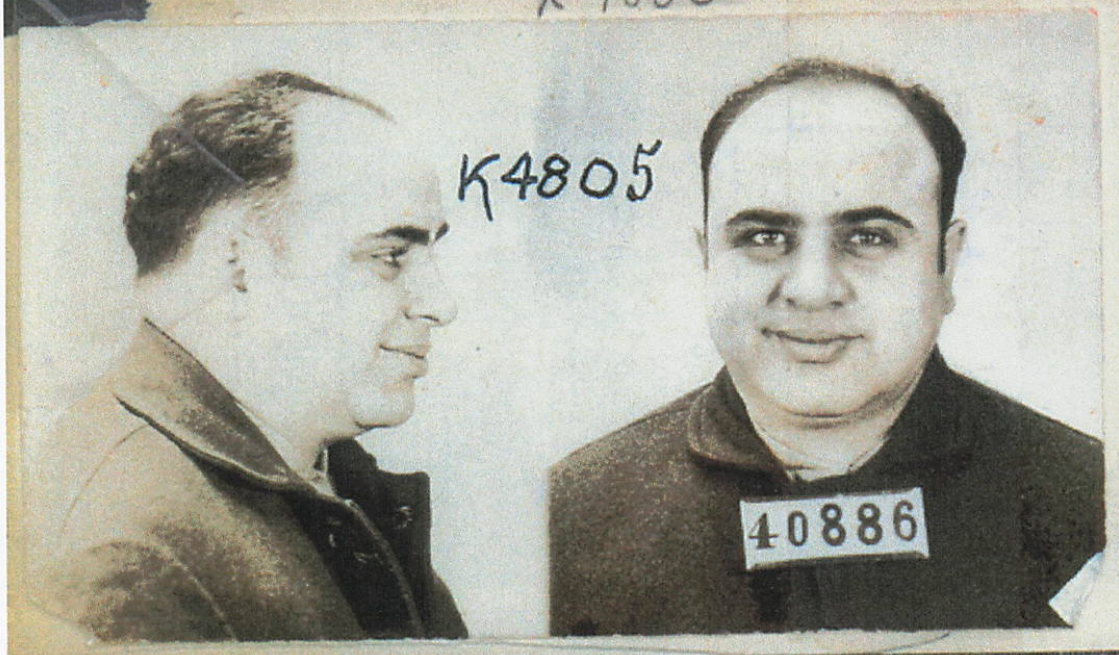

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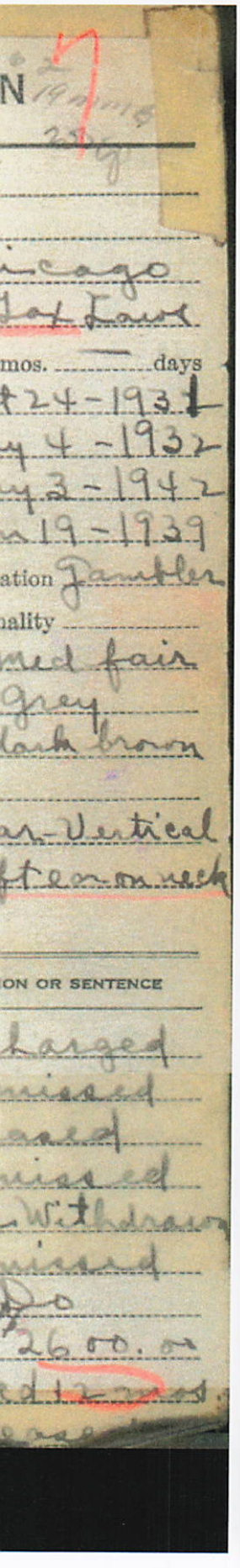
CRIMINAL HISTORY

NAME	NUMBER	CITY OR INSTITUTION	DATE	CHARGE
	C	Ny City	1919	Dis Cond
		Chicago Ill	1923	Traffic Vio
	D	Do	5-8-24	Murder Wit
	E	Do	6-7-26	Vio NPA
	F	Do	7-28-26	Murder
		Do	10-1-26	Vio NPA
	K	Do	11-12-27	Refus. to Testify
	L	Joliet Ill	12-22-27	Con Weapo
		Phila. Pa	5-17-29	Do
	M	Miami Fla	1928	[illegible]

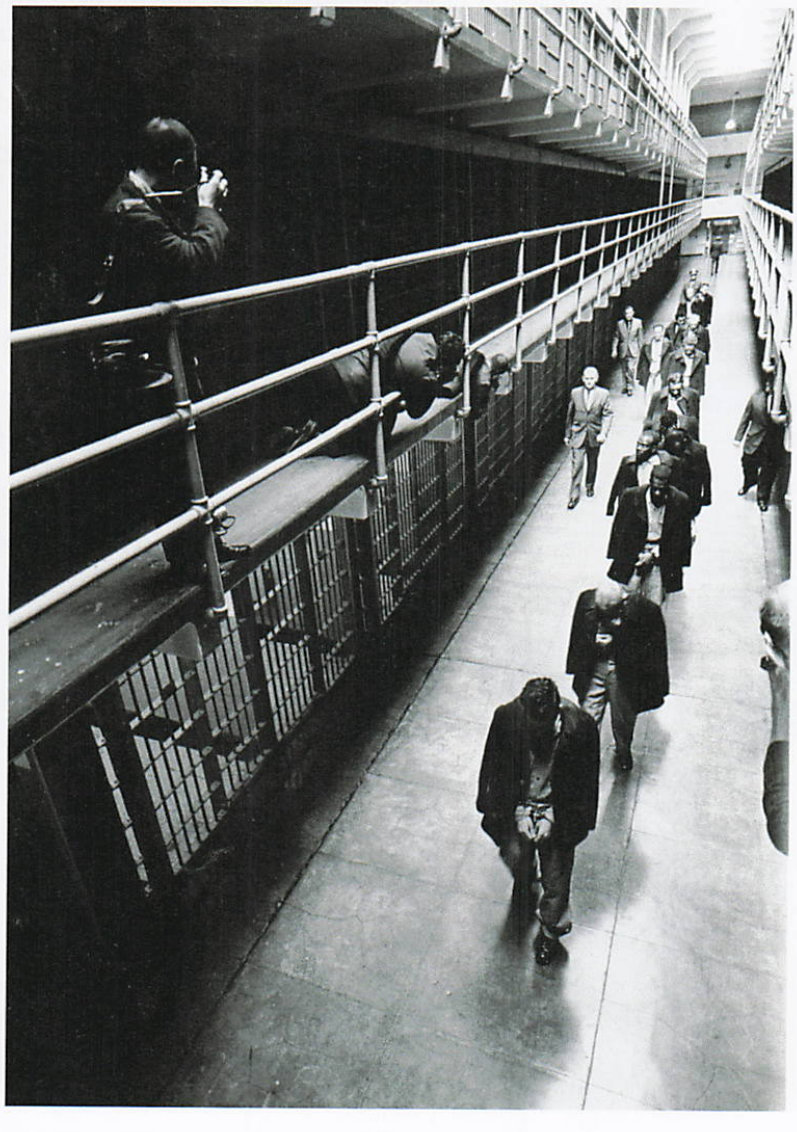


AL "SCARFACE" CAPONE

1899–1947

Al Capone hated being called "Scarface," a name he earned for the facial slashes he had reportedly received in a dancehall sometime between 1917 and 1919. He saw himself as a dapper businessman and wore tailored double-breasted silk suits, pinkie rings and wide-brimmed fedoras. That suited a gentleman who held court at Chicago's posh Hotel Metropole, attended the opera and wooed the press. But legitimate business was not what made Capone's lavish lifestyle possible. In the 1920s and '30s, Capone controlled a sprawling bootlegging, narcotics trafficking, gambling, prostitution, bribery, robbery and murder empire called the Outfit. From his headquarters (in Chicago's Metropole or Lexington Hotels, or in nearby Cicero, Ill.) he kept the police and courts in line with well-paid graft while pulling in an estimated $100 million a year. He is attributed with saying, "I am kind to everyone, but when someone is unkind to me, weak is not what you are going to remember about me." His brutal business savvy was never so clear as when he had seven high-ranking members of George "Bugs" Moran's gang slaughtered on Feb. 14, 1929, in what became known as the St. Valentine's Day Massacre.

His murderous renown spread far beyond the shores of Lake Michigan; Edward G. Robinson played a Capone-like character in the 1931 drama *Little Caesar*. Yet notoriety—and all those bloodied bodies—also attracted the unwanted attention of the Chicago Crime Commission, which dubbed Capone Public Enemy No. 1. The Treasury department also got interested: he owed the government $215,000 in taxes. Capone was taken to trial and then hit with a record-breaking 11-year penalty for tax evasion. He spent much of it at the newly christened Alcatraz penitentiary. By the time Capone emerged from prison in 1939, late-stage syphilis had racked his brain. He died a broken man.



CAPONE'S LONG ARREST record, opposite. Handcuffed prisoners at San Francisco's Alcatraz, where the crime king spent four and a half years.

ARNOLD "THE BRAIN" ROTHSTEIN

1882–1928

Arnold Rothstein liked to keep a low profile. Yet even while out of sight, he cast a long shadow, inspiring characters in *The Great Gatsby*, *Guys and Dolls*, *The Godfather II* and *Boardwalk Empire*. Leaving his comfortable middle-class childhood behind, Rothstein gravitated to pool halls and loan-sharking, and he invested in legitimate real estate holdings and racehorses. The gambler with the cerebral nickname had his hand in many tills. He was believed to have influenced the throwing of the 1919 World Series, owned a high-roller Manhattan casino and funded a transatlantic bootlegging supply route. And as a fixer, Rothstein helped others by spreading bribes to politicians and the police. But his gambling bug led to his downfall. During a poker binge in 1928, he ran up a debt of $320,000 and then would not pay. On November 6, a gunman killed him outside the Park Central Hotel. Before he died, Rothstein refused to reveal who pulled the trigger, saying, "You stick to your trade. I'll stick to mine."

THE SILK-SUITED Rothstein in 1928

ALBERT ANASTASIA

1902–1957

The Italian-born founding partner of the crime syndicate the press dubbed Murder, Inc. earned his nickname, "Lord High Executioner." Albert Anastasia saw whacking troublemakers, squealers and double-crossers as a way to provide order to New York's disorderly crime families, and he was suspected to have personally committed 31 of the at least 63 murders carried out by Murder, Inc. in the New York area between 1931 and 1940. (Some law-enforcement officials believe the total was more than 100.) Starting as a member of Vincent Mangano's crime family, Anastasia eliminated Mangano in 1951 and grabbed control of the family. But his new underboss, Carlo Gambino, saw him as a liability. So on Oct. 25, 1957, while Anastasia was getting a haircut at Grasso's barber shop at the Park Sheraton hotel in Manhattan—the spot where Arnold Rothstein met his fate in 1928—his bodyguard found an excuse to take a break. Two masked men came in and executed the executioner.

ANASTASIA, following police questioning, in 1951

BENJAMIN "BUGSY" SIEGEL

1906–1947

Benjamin Siegel gained the nickname "Bugsy" because of a temper that made him "crazy as a bedbug." As a fledgling criminal, he displayed his volatile nature when he shook down New York pushcart peddlers and bootlegged, ran rackets, and carried out murders for hire with Meyer Lansky. After the country went wet in the 1930s, Siegel settled in California. There he made a fortune in gambling, prostitution, bookmaking and narcotics. All the while, he dreamed of greater glory. Although some had thought of turning Las Vegas into a betters' haven before, it took Siegel's vision to start it on its way. In 1946 he began work on Vegas's Flamingo Hotel—christened with the nickname of Siegel's girlfriend Virginia Hill. Siegel spent wildly, ordering elaborate interiors, but when the Flamingo opened it failed to show an immediate profit. By then, Siegel owed millions to those one shouldn't owe money to. One evening, someone fired though Hill's window and killed him.

SIEGEL AFTER THE murder of Harry Schachter

VIRGINIA "QUEEN OF THE MOB" HILL

1916–1966

Best known as the bombshell girlfriend of Bugsy Siegel, Virginia Hill was a valuable Mob operative in her own right. A poor farm girl from Alabama, Hill fell into Mafia life in 1933 when she moved to Chicago. She quickly proved an important asset to the Outfit, working as a courier of money and information while she made her way—sexual liaison by sexual liaison—through the ranks in Chicago, New York and L.A. Hill eventually landed with Siegel, who was later famously gunned down in her Hollywood home. In 1951, Hill made the papers again while testifying at the Kefauver Committee hearings. Though she denied having any Mafia ties, the IRS began investigating her for tax evasion soon after the hearings. She fled to Austria, where she died in an apparent suicide 14 years later. But her son claimed the circumstances were suspicious—Hill reportedly met with mobster Joe Adonis, another ex-boyfriend, on the last day she was seen alive.

HILL WHILE AT THE Kefauver hearings

GEORGE "MACHINE GUN" KELLY

1897–1954

George Kelly actually preferred to use a .38 caliber pistol when he, his wife, Kathryn, and his gang pulled off their robberies. They hit banks throughout Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas in the 1920s and '30s, but during the Depression, Kathryn is said to have encouraged her husband to take up kidnapping. She also spread the rumor that he was so good with a tommy gun that he could write his name on the side of a barn. In 1933, Kelly nabbed Oklahoma oilman Charles Urschel, and a young future FBI director named J. Edgar Hoover took up the case. The ransom was paid and Urschel released, but Kelly didn't count on his captive recalling distinct sounds and smells from where he was being held. Those recollections led the FBI to the Texas hideout and eventually to Memphis. When the agents burst in, Kelly was alledgedly cowering in a corner crying, "Don't shoot, G-men, don't shoot." The story goes that that was the first time anyone had called FBI agents G-men (meaning government men, already a nickname for *all* federal agents), and the sobriquet stuck.

A DEGUNNED Kelly at the Memphis jail

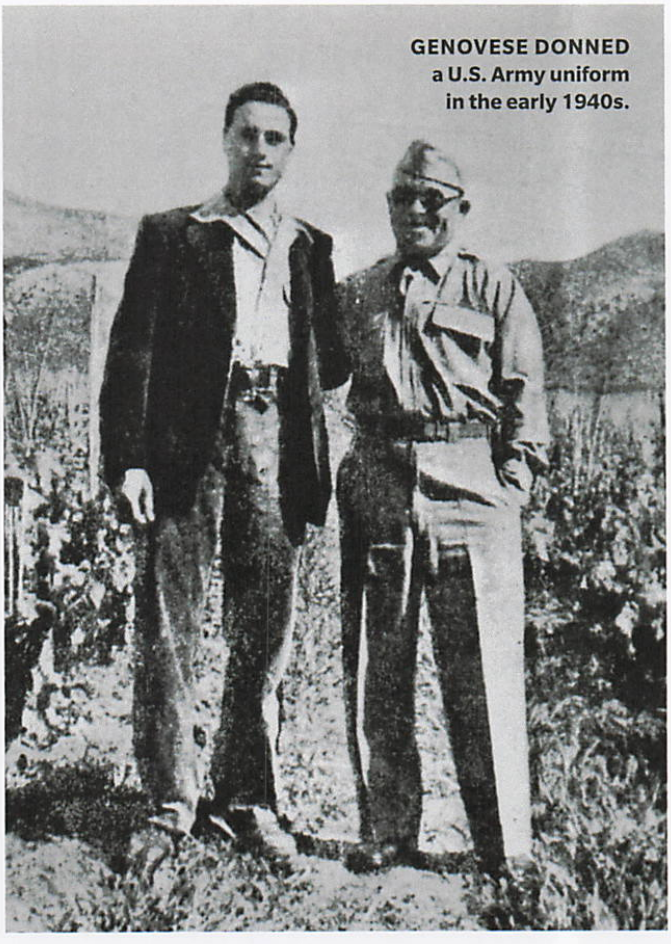
MICKEY COHEN

1913–1976

A boxing gym wasn't where you would expect to find an Orthodox Jewish kid, but Meyer Harris Cohen apparently liked throwing uppercuts more than reading Talmudic passages. In the ring, the Brooklyn-born tough guy fought as Gangster Mickey Cohen and soon lived up to his name. He robbed a bank in Cleveland, worked for Capone's Outfit in Chicago and headed to Los Angeles to organize the rackets. Cohen ran ice cream trucks, lent money, shook down unions and murdered rivals. He not only got the Teamsters union and the Mob to play nice with each other; he also schmoozed with friends such as Frank Sinatra and supported Richard Nixon in his bid for Congress. It was tax evasion, not his many other misdeeds, that earned him two rounds in prison: first in 1951 and again in the 1960s, for a total of almost 14 years.

COHEN JAUNTILY POSES WITH some of his newspaper coverage. *Life* reported in 1950 that it made him "Los Angeles' worst-known citizen."

ST. CLAIR AFTER her arrest for shooting her estranged husband



GENOVESE DONNED a U.S. Army uniform in the early 1940s.

STEPHANIE ST. CLAIR

1897–1969

After arriving from the French Caribbean in 1911, "Madame" Stephanie St. Clair quickly staked out her turf. She led a Harlem extortion-and-theft gang called the "40 Thieves" and by the 1930s was raking in good money developing and running numbers rackets (illegal lotteries). This allowed the reigning "Policy Queen" of Harlem to indulge in her love of fine clothes, cars and homes. But the cash-rich queendom attracted the attention of usurpers like Dutch Schultz. Battles broke out, and after four years of gang war St. Clair abdicated from her position of power. By then, U.S. Attorney Thomas Dewey had started to investigate Schultz, who decided he wanted to assassinate Dewey. Schultz's colleague Lucky Luciano told him not to do it, but when Schultz planned to go after Dewey anyway, Luciano had him rubbed out. Schultz lived for a day, giving St. Clair the chance to send a parting telegram, "As ye sow, so shall ye reap," signing it "Madame, Queen of Policy."

VITO "DON VITONE" GENOVESE

1897–1969

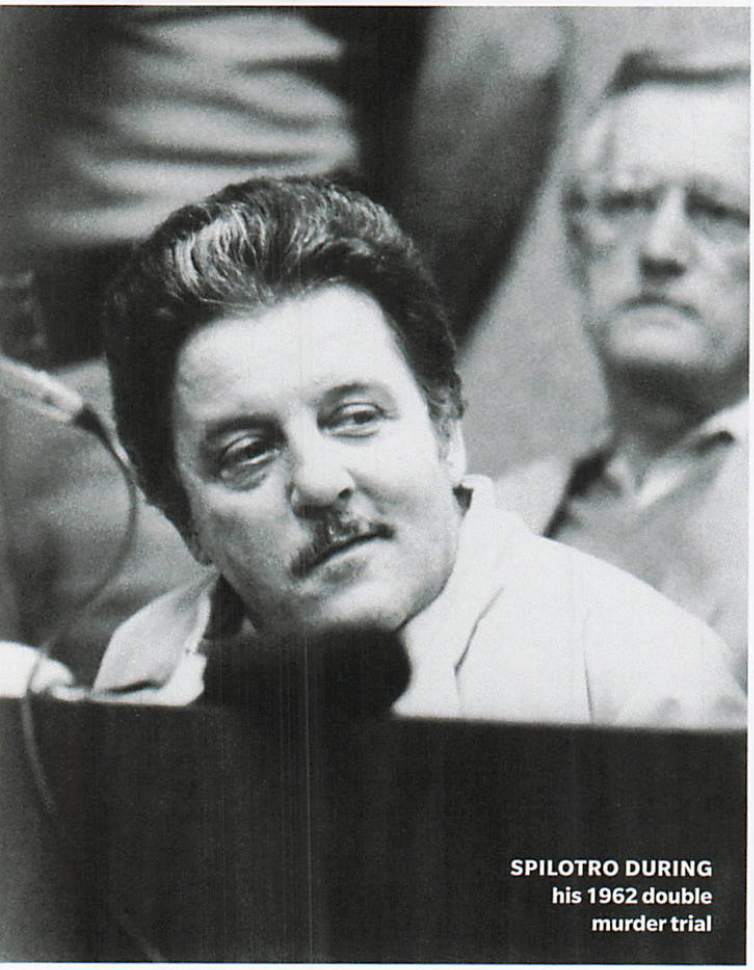
He started his disreputable career by robbing push-carts in New York's Little Italy, but soon the Don set up the Genovese Trading Company to cover up his many rackets. In on the hit on Joe Masseria as well as the murder of Salvatore Maranzano that made Lucky Luciano chief, Vito Genovese didn't limit himself to offing his compatriots: after Genovese's wife, Donata, died in 1931, Vito decided he wanted to marry his cousin Anna Petillo and had her husband strangled. The Don fled to Italy in 1937 to avoid a murder rap, and there the Naples-born Genovese helped Italian dictator Benito Mussolini. During the war he switched allegiances, offering his services to the U.S. Army until he was recognized as the Mafioso wanted for murder and was returned to New York to face charges. He escaped conviction when the prime witness died while in protective custody, but the feds caught up with him for narcotics trafficking. Yet even while he cooled his heels behind bars, this boss of bosses continued to issue orders. Genovese died in prison of a heart attack on Valentine's Day in 1969.

LUCCHESE BEFORE the U.S. Senate

GAETANO "TOMMY" LUCCHESE

1899–1967

Friends were important to Tommy Lucchese. As he worked his way up the ranks in Prohibition-era New York, he joined up with Lucky Luciano and Vito Genovese. In 1931 he and his new friends seized control of New York's underworld when they killed bosses Joe Masseria and Salvatore Maranzano. Lucchese became Tommy Gagliano's No. 2, and when Gagliano died in 1951, Lucchese took over. As head of the Lucchese family, he looked to strengthen his position while enhancing his bloodline. In 1962 his daughter Frances married Thomas Gambino, the son of fellow crime boss Carlo Gambino. It is said that more than 1,000 guests attended, conjuring a scene straight out of *The Godfather*. As the two families celebrated, Gambino reportedly gave Lucchese $30,000 in cash, and Lucchese then gifted his new in-law a cut of John F. Kennedy International Airport's robbery racket.



SPILOTRO DURING his 1962 double murder trial

ANTHONY "TONY THE ANT" SPILOTRO

1938–1986

Long before Anthony Spilotro's rise to kingpin of the Vegas underworld, he was raised in the Mob's shadow: his parents owned Patsy's Restaurant, a favorite hangout of the Chicago Outfit. As such, Spilotro's criminal career began early, but it was his sadistic murders of two thieves that put him on the Outfit's radar (as well as the FBI's). In 1971 he became Chicago's enforcer and representative in Las Vegas, running loan-sharking rackets, skimming the Outfit-connected casinos and operating a lucrative burglary ring on the side with his crew, the "Hole in the Wall Gang." But Spilotro's ambition was becoming a liability—the Nevada Gaming Commission blacklisted him, he had an affair with a fellow mobster's wife, and he reportedly ordered an unapproved hit on a made man. After a botched robbery by his gang resulted in numerous arrests, flipped men and, ultimately, the conviction of boss Joseph "Doves" Aiuppa, the Outfit retaliated. In 1986, Spilotro and his brother were beaten to death and buried in an Indiana field near one of Aiuppa's former properties.

FRANK "THE PRIME MINISTER" COSTELLO

1891–1973

Frank Costello seemed to have it all. He started as a bootlegger and bookmaker with pals Lucky Luciano and Vito Genovese, and he ended up wielding control over a gambling empire that stretched from New York to the Caribbean. He also had a few legitimate businesses in the meatpacking and poultry markets. But when Costello turned 50, he decided he needed more out of life. Seeking social acceptance, the Italian-born gangster and friend of dictator Benito Mussolini's son-in-law began to hold court at New York's Waldorf Astoria Hotel, rubbing elbows with the rich and famous. The police, however, knew it was just a charade, and in 1951 the U.S. Senate subpoenaed Costello, seeking information on organized crime. Instead of pleading the Fifth like the other mobsters in the televised hearings had done, Costello agreed to field questions, and reluctantly let the television cameras film only his well-manicured but fidgety hands. Eventually the questions hit a nerve, and he walked out of the courtroom, which landed him in jail for contempt. Shortly after, he was jailed for tax evasion. After he exited prison in 1961, he retired to his estate in Sands Point, N.Y.

REPORTERS MOB Costello as he exits prison in 1961.

POLICE ASKING Lansky (center) about Albert Anastasia's death

MEYER LANSKY

1902–1983

A Jewish Russian immigrant and a financial genius, Meyer Lansky, known as the "Mob's Accountant," was a founder of the National Crime Syndicate, a multiethnic (press-named) coalition of mobsters and the Mafia. He hooked up with Lucky Luciano and Bugsy Siegel at a young age, and most historians believe he helped orchestrate Luciano's rise to power by coordinating the hits on Joe Masseria and Salvatore Maranzano. Post-Prohibition, Lansky backed gambling operations around the country; then, during World War II, he brokered a mutually beneficial deal between Luciano and the U.S. Navy, Luciano's waterfront contacts providing intelligence to help the FBI foil German spies in exchange for Luciano's lengthy prison sentence being commuted. After the war, Lansky was a major stakeholder in the rise of Las Vegas casinos as well as several Cuban casinos. Rumors estimated his fortune at $300 million. But when he died from cancer in 1983, Lansky's estate was worth less than $30,000. If he had hidden a fortune somewhere, the government never found it.

SALVATORE "MOONEY SAM" GIANCANA

1908–1975

Salvatore Giancana developed a reputation as a ruthless killer early on, while running with a group of young Chicago criminals called the 42 Gang. The gang was eventually absorbed into the Outfit, with Giancana first serving as Al Capone's wheelman before graduating to triggerman. In 1957, Giancana acquired day-to-day leadership as "front boss" when Tony Accardo stepped down. The FBI took an early interest in Giancana's dealings and haunted his reign throughout the late 1950s and '60s, bugging known meeting spots, planting news stories and following him around on outings. Giancana was also one of the mobsters recruited in the CIA's plot to assassinate Fidel Castro. Thanks to all this federal attention, Giancana was stripped of his title in 1966. He lived in Mexico for a while, returning to the U.S. in 1974. Less than a year later, just before he was due to testify about the Castro scheme, Giancana was executed—shot to death—in his Chicago-area home.

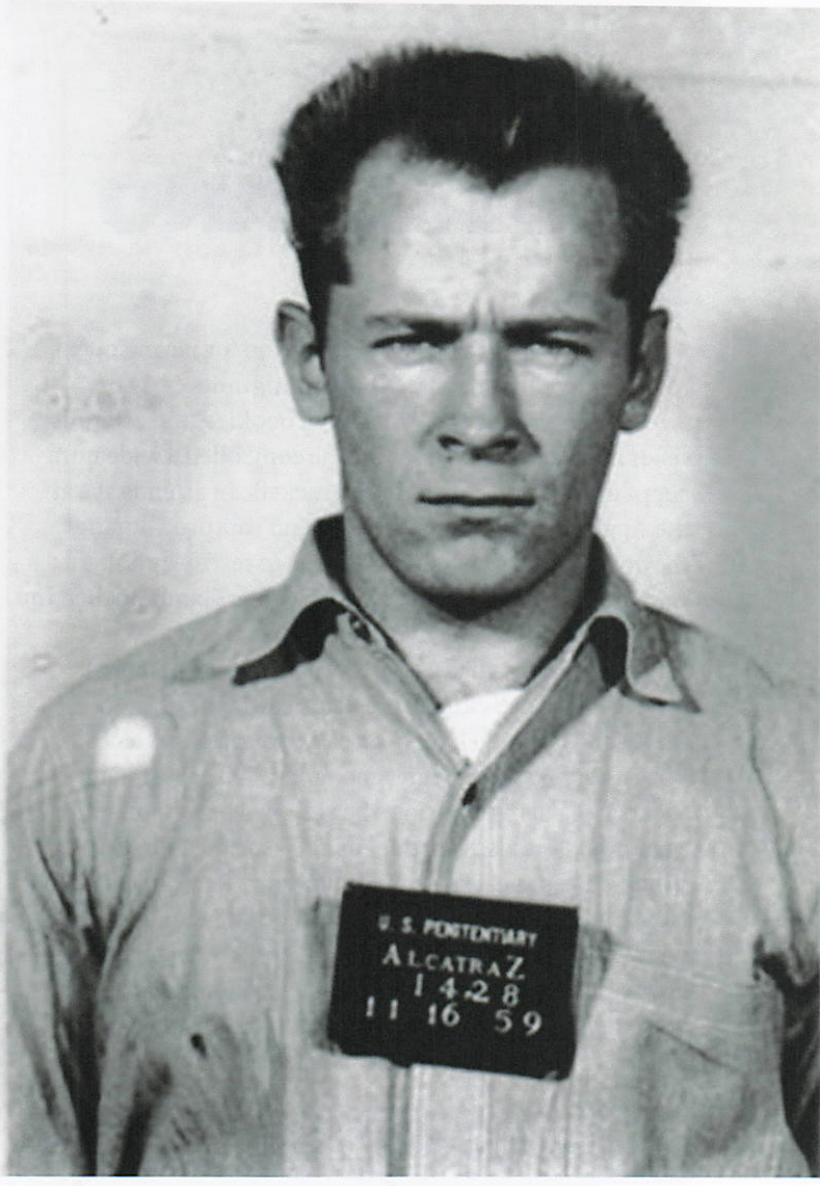
A HANDCUFFED Giancana in 1957

SANTO TRAFFICANTE JR.

1914–1987

Succeeding his late father, Santo Trafficante Jr. took the reins of the Tampa Mafia in 1954 and quickly became the most powerful boss in South Florida and among the most powerful in Cuba. With links to the Bonanno family and Chicago boss Sam Giancana, he was present for many of the Mafia's biggest headline-making moments. He was among those arrested at the infamous Apalachin meeting in 1957 (and arrested again at 1966's "mini Apalachin" sit-down in Queens). Trafficante Jr. was also linked to the killing of Murder Inc. head Albert Anastasia and questioned about the assassination of John F. Kennedy, but he was never charged with either crime. Owing to his strong Cuban ties—he operated several lucrative Havana casinos and was rumored to have connections to other Mafia-owned casinos under Cuba's president, Fulgencio Batista—Trafficante Jr. was recruited for a CIA plot to poison Fidel Castro, though he later claimed he only served as a translator for other operatives.

TRAFFICANTE JR. at his nightclub in Havana



BULGER'S MUG SHOT, and with girlfriend Catherine Greig in 1988

JAMES "WHITEY" BULGER

1929–

One of the infamous heads of Boston's "Winter Hill Gang" from the 1970s through the mid-'90s, Bulger and his men dealt in extortion, drug trafficking, gambling and even arms trafficking for the IRA. But Bulger's operations seemed unimpeded by law enforcement. That's because in the mid-1970s, Bulger became an FBI informant, feeding feds information on rivals in exchange for protection. In 1995, after being tipped off that, despite his arrangement, the FBI was coming for him, Bulger went on the run. He evaded FBI agents for 16 years (and made their Ten Most Wanted Fugitives list) before they finally caught up to him in California in 2011. Bulger was charged with 19 murders

and numerous counts of racketeering, extortion, money laundering, drug trafficking and possession of weapons. In 2013 he was convicted of most of the charges (including 11 murders) and sentenced to prison for two life terms, plus five years—a sentence he is currently serving.

PAUL "BIG PAULIE" CASTELLANO

1915–1985

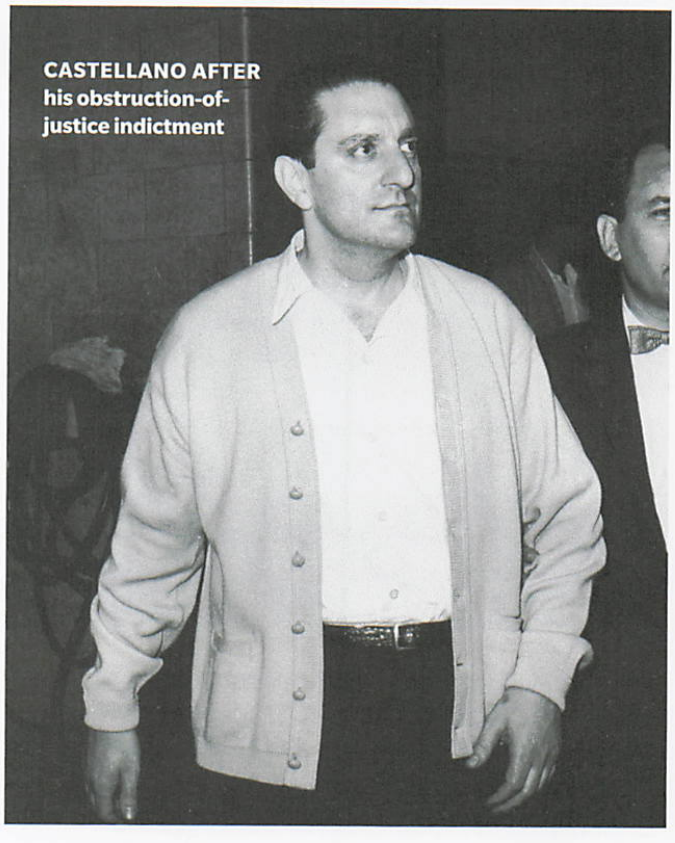
Paul Castellano had a reputation for never squealing. This son of Sicilian immigrants early on ran numbers for Brooklyn bookies, and after his sister married Carlo Gambino, he controlled a wide number of unions and construction rackets. In attendance at the Apalachin conference in 1957 and captured during the police's raid, Castellano refused to testify and spent a year in prison. His loyalty paid off: when Gambino died in 1976, "Big Paulie" took over.

The Gambinos had 250 made men and ran a smorgasbord of illegal activities, from drug trafficking to auto theft—and it should have been easy street for the new boss. But Castellano wasn't quiet enough. When government agents bugged his mansion, they learned how he green-lit 25 murders. He also ran afoul of his associate John Gotti. When Castellano headed to Manhattan's Sparks Steak House in December 1985, Gotti had four henchmen in white trench coats waiting for him. As Gotti watched from down the block, the shooters permanently silenced Castellano (and his unfortunate driver, underboss/bodyguard Thomas Bilotti) and anointed Gotti the new chief.

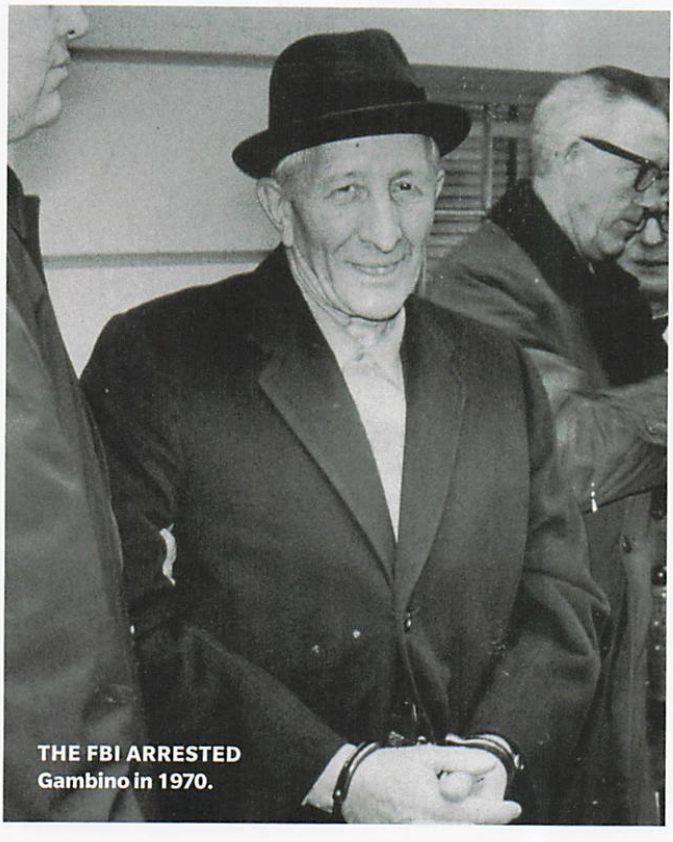
CARLO "DON CARLO" GAMBINO

1902–1976

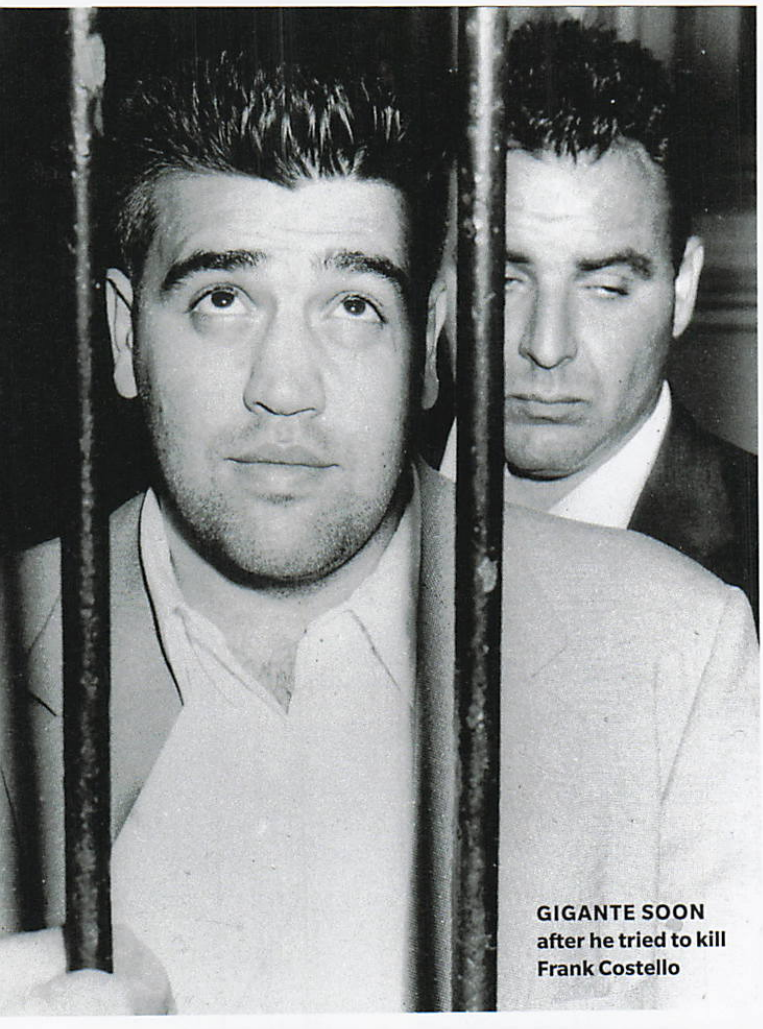
Carlo Gambino rose from humble origins to build and rule one of the most prominent and dominant crime families in American history. In 1931, early in Gambino's career, he and fellow "Young Turks"—a group of Italian and Jewish mobsters that included Meyer Lansky, Bugsy Siegel and Lucky Luciano—were chafing at the Old World–style leadership. Luciano took the lead in revolutionizing the American Mafia by organizing a national Mafia syndicate, the Commission, which Gambino would head from 1959 to 1976. Gambino took over (and renamed) the Mangano family in 1957, reigning for nearly 20 years, amassing immense wealth and power via a mobster's buffet of enterprises, including gambling, hijacking, loan-sharking and labor racketeering. Despite his influential position, Gambino kept a relatively low public profile, which probably kept him out of prison. He spent only 22 months in jail (for operating an illegal liquor still in 1937). He died a free man of natural causes in his Long Island home—ordinary circumstances for most, but an unusually peaceful end for a boss.



CASTELLANO AFTER his obstruction-of-justice indictment



THE FBI ARRESTED Gambino in 1970.



GIGANTE SOON after he tried to kill Frank Costello

VINCENT "CHIN" GIGANTE

1928–2005

A former prizefighter, Vincent Gigante developed a reputation for being cunning and ruthless long before he took the helm of New York's Genovese family in the 1980s. An enforcer for, and protégé of, Vito Genovese, Gigante made the botched attempt on Frank Costello's life that opened the door for Genovese to take over the family. It's estimated that Gigante pulled in more than $100 million a year at the peak of his 23-year reign. Not that he flaunted it. For decades, to dodge legal prosecution, Gigante feigned mental illness, strolling around New York City in a worn bathrobe and talking to himself (and parking meters); the press dubbed him "the Odd Father." He was eventually deemed fit to stand trial and was convicted on murder conspiracy and racketeering charges, but he continued to run the family from behind bars. In the mid-2000s, Gigante fell ill and died in a prison medical center.

IN 1959 MARCELLO invoked the Fifth before the Senate.

CARLOS "LITTLE MAN" MARCELLO

1910–1993

Born in Tunisia and raised in Louisiana, Carlos Marcello was the boss of the New Orleans Mafia for more than 30 years. After an early career in petty crime, Marcello moved up the ranks of NOLA's Matranga family, even marrying the sister of an underboss, before he took over the family operations in 1947, after the feds deported "Silver Dollar Sam" Carolla. Marcello formed alliances with other mobsters nationally, and his control extended to outposts in Dallas and South Florida, where he collaborated with his close friend Santo Trafficante Jr. It was these shady ties, as well as a history of run-ins with the Kennedy family, that fueled widespread conspiracy theories that Marcello was connected to John F. Kennedy's assassination; however, no official link was ever made. Marcello did eventually go to prison in 1981, convicted of racketeering and attempting to bribe a federal judge. He served eight years and died at home in Metairie, La., a few years later.

HAPPY'S II
COFFEE SHOPP
PIZZA

JOHN "THE TEFLON DON"
GOTTI
1940–2002

Also known as "the Dapper Don" for his opulent appearance and flashy public persona, the notorious Gambino boss had an affable demeanor that belied a violent, short-tempered disposition. His rise was swift and brutal, and it broke many long-held Mafia rules. As John Gotti reportedly idolized Murder, Inc. founder Albert Anastasia, it was fitting that his big break came from former Anastasia capo and Gambino underboss "Neil" Dellacroce, who mentored Gotti, eventually promoting him to captain in 1977. But Gotti's ruthlessness extended beyond his Gambino-related activities.

In 1980, Gotti's 12-year-old son was tragically killed in an auto accident by neighbor John Favara, who "mysteriously" disappeared a few months later. Gotti denied any involvement. But testimony from a different trial later indicated that Gotti had Favara killed and dissolved in a vat of acid. Favara's remains were never found.

Gotti's crew drew unwanted attention to the family in 1985 when they were indicted on drug-trafficking charges, infuriating boss Paul Castellano. Gotti knew that as captain, he would face death as punishment. So instead, and without the Commission's official blessing, he had Castellano killed and took control of the family himself.

Though Gotti's reign was relatively short, it was lucrative and very bloody. The family raked in more than $500 million under Gotti, but he racked up a body count, ordering numerous hits on enemies and even loyalists who ran afoul of his temper. Eschewing the low profile traditionally adopted by most Mafia heads, Gotti basked in the public's attention. Despite his conspicuousness, the FBI couldn't corner him. They brought him to trial several times, but—due to jury tampering and witness intimidation—Gotti was acquitted again and again, earning him the nickname "Teflon Don."

Finally, in 1992, with testimony from his flipped underboss "Sammy the Bull" Gravano, Gotti was convicted on multiple charges, including five counts of murder. He was sentenced to life in prison and died of cancer 10 years into his sentence.

THE TEFLON DON ARRIVES at court in 1990, opposite. Gotti hung out at the Ravenite Social Club on Mulberry Street, unaware it had been bugged.

4 WHY WE LOVE THE MOB

IN MARTIN SCORSESE'S 1990 film *Goodfellas*, Joe Pesci (with gun), Robert De Niro and Ray Liotta play a trio of murderous wiseguys who dream of becoming made men.

4

MADE FOR THE MOVIES

BY DANIEL D'ADDARIO

WE DON'T JUST LIKE MOB STORIES. WE LIKE—AND always have liked—mobsters.

Separated from the criminals and the complicit by our screens, we are safe to root for them all. Marlon Brando's turn as Don Vito Corleone in *The Godfather* (1972) gave rise to decades' worth of loving impersonations, as though the character's misdeeds were less memorable than his charmingly cotton-mouthed wheeze. Scarface, as played by Al Pacino in Brian De Palma's 1983 biopic, is a cult hero whose poster is to this day a dorm-room staple. James Gandolfini turned Tony Soprano into a character fans rooted for, even as the show on which he starred, *The Sopranos* (1999–2007), spared no detail of depravity about his violent and sexual impulses. And after the 2002 death of John Gotti, a real-world gangster, his daughter became a reality-TV heroine on *Growing Up Gotti* (2004–2005), quickly followed by VH1's *Mob Wives* (2011–2016).

It's not just their stories that compel us—the action of most Mob movies and TV shows is fairly repellent, and reality shows have few actual story lines. It's these characters, people who enter the pop-culture lexicon and

MICHAEL CORLEONE—played by Al Pacino, center—in Francis Ford Coppola's 1972 *The Godfather* assumes the title of Don and receives the respect he is owed.

become something like heroes.

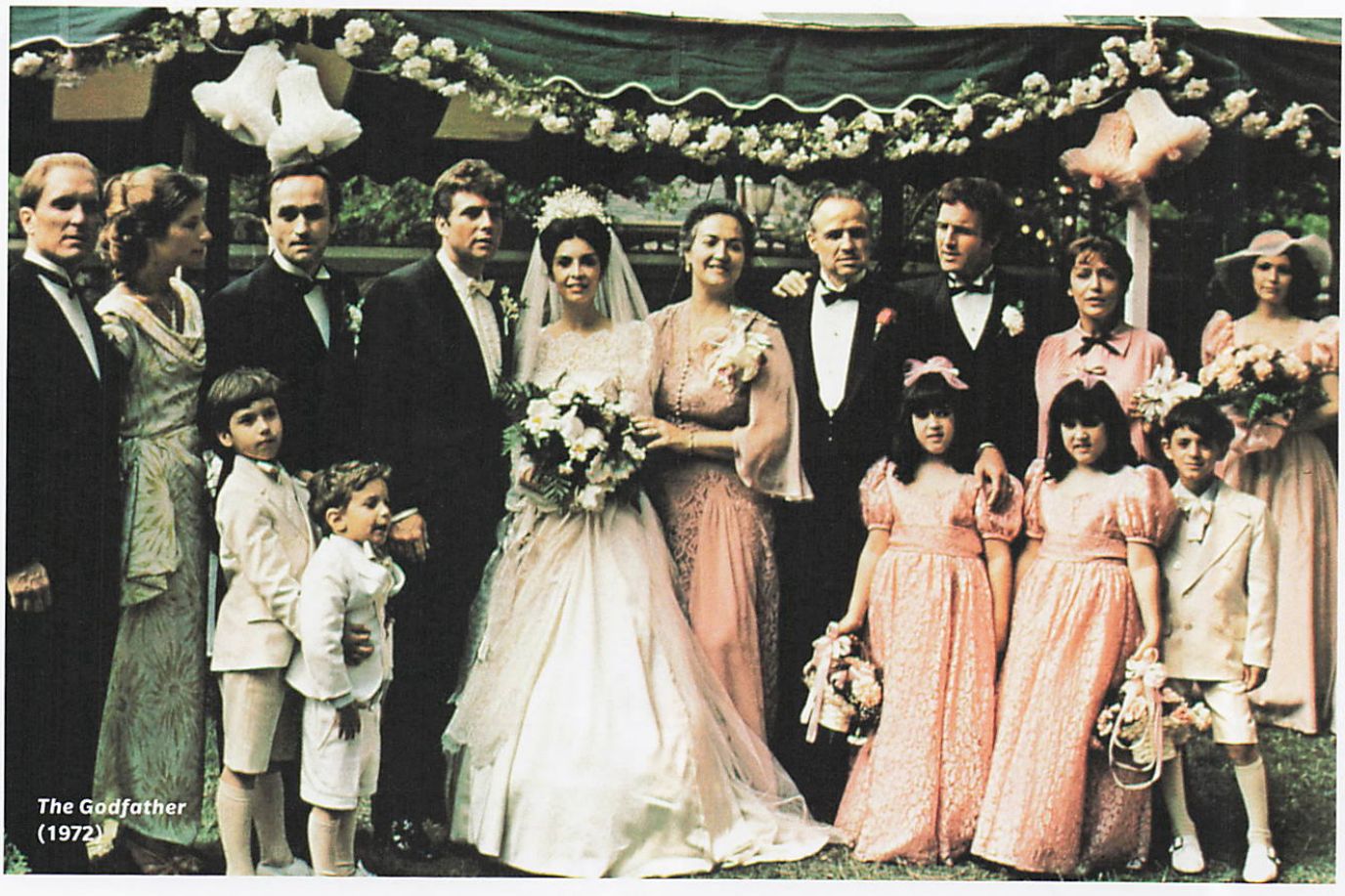
What accounts for our love of the Mob on film? It may be that La Cosa Nostra's aura of familial closeness—whether or not its onscreen members are literally family—gives us something to aspire to. (Mega-movie franchises such as *Star Wars* and *The Fast and the Furious* also depend upon that "family" closeness.) In Mob movies, before things go bad, and also after the gunsmoke has cleared, we see mobsters socializing together and bonding.

It's the nature of the lifestyle. If you're going to be in a violent and criminal mob, you had better have a foundation of trust with those around you. This trust can be built in glamorous settings—such as the nightclub in *Goodfellas* (1990) where everyone seems to know Ray Liotta's Henry Hill—and in mundane ones. Roger Ebert once wrote about *The Godfather*: "We tend to identify with Don Corleone's family not because we dig gang wars, but because we have been with them from the beginning, watching them wait for battle while sitting at the kitchen table and eating chow mein out of paper cartons." And we love Tony Soprano's milieu not because he and his extended Mob "family" inhabit a world that's impossibly glamorous (they assuredly don't) but because of their relationships, their closeness with one another and their own, understood rules of the road.

"It's the club you always wanted to have," says Jeanine Basinger, a film historian who teaches at Wesleyan University and has authored many books about cinema. "It's everybody having fun together, knowing each other. It's kind of a frat-boy thing."

In Basinger's view, the wealth the Mob creates for its members is less compelling than the freedoms it earns them and the intimacy that gets developed. "These mobs have glamour, vicuña coats, boutonnieres, spats—they've got good stuff," she says. "But more importantly, they also have a very strong camaraderie—they are loyal, except for the ones who aren't. They have friendship and loyalty. These are all things that we like, and they're couched to us in ways that are releasing

IT'S NOT ALWAYS HAPPILY ever after, as newlyweds Connie and Rizzi (Shire and Russo, center below) learn in *The Godfather*, and Tony (played by tommy-gun-wielding Muni) discovers in *Scarface*.



The Godfather (1972)

from restrictive norms."

Those norms, and thus the pop-culture works created about them, pick up different shading over time. (Tony Soprano's regular therapy sessions would have been foreign to any James Cagney–portrayed Mob character.) And there have been many such shadings over more than 100 years. Basinger dates the genre, roughly, to D.W. Griffith's 1912 film *The Musketeers of Pig Alley*, barely remembered today.

The wealth the Mob creates for its members is less compelling than the freedoms it earns them.

YET CERTAIN THINGS ARE UNIVERSAL. THE FILM critic Robert Warshow's influential 1948 essay "The Gangster as Tragic Hero" notes that the civic optimism of much of his era's popular culture, meant to bolster the public's spirit, "is fundamentally satisfying to no one, not even to those who would be most disoriented without its support." The gangster is a figure whom Americans can immediately recognize as "what we want to be and what we are afraid we may become." In his rejection of the role of media to elevate the mood of the general population, Warshow writes, "the gangster speaks for us, expressing that part of the American psyche which rejects the qualities and the demands of modern life, which rejects 'Americanism' itself."

Warshow emphasized the original *Scarface*, the 1932 smash that, at the height of the Great Depression, told a story in which a gangster loosely modeled on Al Capone rises to stratospheric heights and then wipes out fantastically—both thanks to his willingness to play outside established norms. "It is a fantasy of an economic rise," says Lee Grieveson, a professor at University College London who is an expert on American gangster films. "The so-

called American dream. It's a fantasy of empowerment." That the economic rise comes from abandoning the rules the rest of us abide by is no coincidence; Scarface's coming into money seems to matter less than his liberation to do as he pleases. After all, the American dream is one of success forged by rugged individualism. What's more individual than to exist ungoverned by any law? Warshow went on to explain that Scarface's downfall after separating from the pack is, therefore, to be expected.

Scarface's mastery of the underworld made him a deeply relevant figure. Grieveson points out that the movie *Scarface* made its impact near the end of Prohibition, an era when criminal syndicates dramatically expanded their reach and power. The film is nourished by "a growing sense that there are economic practices and forces outside of the mainstream that are essential to its functioning but that are largely unseen."

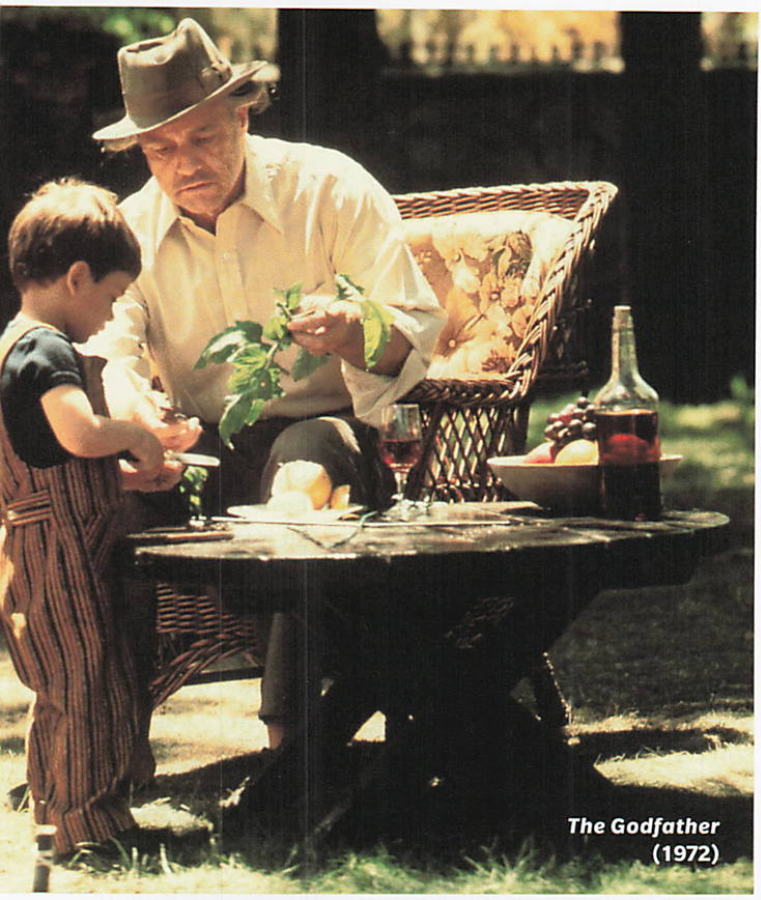
The movie works on both literal and figurative levels: the Mob itself, along with what it might stand for in our imaginations. "Often I think these films are representations of criminality," says Grieveson, "but metaphorical for criminality of an economic system." Leave the particulars of what any one gangster does on film aside—they've become masters of a system that members of the audience may well believe to be rigged against them by constructing their own style of governance and their own political structures. Mobsters are, like all the characters we grab on to, dreamers of a sort.

"One gangster film follows another as one musical or one Western follows another," wrote Warshow, and it's plainly true that gangsters, for all their special depravity, are basically equivalent to the cowboy or the lovelorn dancer in the American moviegoer's mind. They're stock characters who stand in for various traits. Those traits have fallen in and out of fashion over time—so although the gangster film is one of American cinema's defining genres, it is not always in step with the country's mood.

Other movies that helped define the aesthetic of mobster cinema during the Mob's rise to prominence included Josef von Sternberg's *Underworld* (1927), a silent film that won the first Oscar for writing for its depiction of a gangster who, in the end, breaks good, and *The Public Enemy* (1931), in which star James Cagney undergoes a melodramatic rise and fall. After that film's release, TIME wrote that it "carries to its ultimate absurdity the fashion for romanticizing gangsters, for even in defeat the public enemy is endowed with grandeur." By the end of these two films, the gangsters have either renounced their trade or

***Underworld* (1927)**

***The Public Enemy* (1931)**



The Godfather (1972)

The Departed (2006)

HOLLYWOOD'S LOVE AFFAIR with gangsters, clockwise from top left: Clive Brook as a mobster, Marlon Brando as a doting grandfather, Jack Nicholson's take on Whitey Bulger, and James Cagney playing an unhinged hoodlum.

been struck down, and the power of the Mob as a social unit has failed. In the case of these particular movies, the power does not lie in showing us a club we want to be a part of. (That would come later.) It lies in exposing a new world and then revealing that it's not all it's cracked up to be. We who've been thrilled for hours in our cinema seats, however, know better.

In fact, the Mob *had* to fail somewhat in those movies. That was a condition placed upon movies by the Hays Production Code, a set of industry bylaws imposed in 1930 that forbade the depiction of criminals who were not eventually punished. Audiences could root for the "bad guys"—the Hays Code couldn't forbid that—but they had to see justice meted out, too. After that production code, the popularity of the genre ebbed and flowed. There was a resurgence with lower-budget films that capitalized on Senator Estes Kefauver's hearings about the Mob in the early 1950s. Yet, as Basinger notes, in the movie period immediately following World War II "the main form was the Western, when you saw those really violent, mature antihero Westerns that permeated the 1950s into the 1960s."

BUT THAT CHANGED IN 1972 WHEN *THE GODFATHER* helped set off a new wave of interest in the lives of made men. Based on novelist Mario Puzo's 1969 best seller, the film by Francis Ford Coppola became the highest-grossing movie ever made to date, won a Best Picture Oscar and generated two sequels. It also helped breathe life into an American genre. "It's a turning point," says Basinger.

It's not hard to understand why. In Brando's Don Corleone, we see a man for whom family is everything—so much so that he wants to wipe out all threats—and also a man whose rise in the world seems perversely rooted in core American values. *New York Times* critic Vincent Canby observed the Corleone family's remove from their neighbors and the laws of their adopted nation before adding: "This is all the more terrifying because, within their isolation, there is such a sense of love and honor, no matter how bizarre."

Terrifying, yes—enough to tingle the spines of the millions of viewers who have kept the film in the American canon. The film also puts forward a compelling vision of strength through unity, and, at the

same time that it depicts a group the viewer may wish to be part of, it also plumbs a world viewers cannot experience, a world in which bravado trumps law.

Mark Winegardner, who continued writing the *Godfather* book franchise after Puzo's death in 1999, says the story works on a primal level. "It's American mythology," says Winegardner. "One of the things you really see over the course of the '70s, a consequence to the aftermath of *The Godfather*'s success, is the superseding of the Western as our American mythology [by] the Mob saga." He also pegs that shift in part to the urbanization of America; as cities grew more populous, a greater proportion of Americans found something familiar in Mob stories.

The second film installment of *The Godfather* saga, in 1974, digs deeper into the young Vito Corleone's origins in America and is at its bones a story about the immigrant in America. (That's another hallmark of Mob films—and it's not always the Italian immigrant community. *The Departed*, Martin Scorsese's 2006 Oscar winner, looks at life among the Irish-American community in Boston.) The immigrants in *The Godfather* are learning how to win in America by accumulating cash and power and, at the same time, stopping short of assimilation by remaining in communities that extend barely beyond the family. It's a social tightrope that many who watch Don Corleone find intimately familiar.

As cities grew more populous, a greater number of Americans found something familiar in Mob stories.

In 1972, Americans were far more savvy about the American Mob than they'd been in the era of Prohibition and the original *Scarface*. Winegardner notes that the post-*Godfather* ascendancy of the Mob story partially stems from increased awareness: FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover finally admitted in 1957 that the American Mafia existed. And, says Winegardner of his early-2000s entrance into the *Godfather* series, "by the time I was writing, everyone who'd seen half of an episode of *The Sopranos* knew more about the Mob than the FBI [had initially] claimed to."

The movies and TV shows that followed in the wake of *The Godfather* were not colored merely by increased awareness of real-life organized crime but also by a growing catalog of pop-culture references. The films of Scorsese riff on Coppola's epic with improvisational flair, turning melodrama into druggy, groovy comedy, as with *Goodfellas* and its loose-cannon psychopath played by Joe Pesci (a brand-new archetype), or turning it into edgy noir, as with *The Departed*.

***Goodfellas* (1990)**

THE GENRE FITS ITSELF TO ITS time with the skill and resilience of a hardened criminal. In the 1930s, morality tales allowed viewers to escape into a world of evil only to then have their own life values reinforced by the end. In the 1970s, after the old, moralistic studio system (and the Hays Production Code) had fallen, crime could be used as a way of illustrating the saga of the striving American immigrant class.

***The Sopranos* (1999–2007)**

Starting in 1999, on HBO, a New Jersey mobster could see the needs of his nuclear family and his "family" conflict repeatedly over the course of six seasons, all ending in a gloriously inconclusive manner with the fate of the Sopranos left unresolved. The real-life Mafia by then was under siege; the pop-culture version of the story line, too, shook itself out into a less grandiloquent story of life after a fall, with tragedies and triumphs striking a depressive minor chord as opposed to the Corleones' grand soap opera. Operating after his industry's peak and confronted constantly with his inadequacies, it's little wonder Tony Soprano was depressed. Yet viewers responded positively to both his attempts to make something grander of himself and his desire to wipe out his enemies. Even as the show painted him as a villain, he found legions of fans.

It's the sort of story that Lou Ferrante can understand. A former member of the Gambino crime family who served eight years in prison, Ferrante is now an author whose books include *Unlocked: The Life and Crimes of a Mafia Insider* and *Mob Rules: What the Mafia Can Teach the Legitimate Businessman*. "I'm sort of pigeonholed into writing about the Mob," Ferrante says. "As desperately as I want to break out and write about other things, the book deals I get are always 'Write about the Mob.' " The subject matter has won him fans around the world, who write to him saying his stories of time with the Gambinos and behind bars invigorates them. "The whole thing is this quest for freedom. There are all these responsibilities—you can't just say, 'I'm going to disappear for a few days,' and what, leave your family to starve? The mobster does do that—the mobster does whatever he wants! I'd rather abide by the law and live the life I live today, because I think we do need laws and I believe in that. But I will say I've never achieved that sense of freedom that I had then and I never will again."

PESCI, IN *GOODFELLAS*, believes he is about to join a family, opposite. Above, a quiet moment in *The Sopranos*, in which paisanos—led by Gandolfini, left—violently feud.

Those who follow Ferrante's stories, or any of the stories Hollywood has told us about the American Mob, can relate. Watching a movie about the Mob affords us a few hours of respite from a demanding world. We meet people—good, bad, both—who react to an evolving world exactly as they see fit. In many ways, we can live through them. As Ferrante says: "If you had to say to me, name one good thing about that whole life that I was involved in, I can't tell you hijacking, I can't tell you racketeering, but I could tell you dispensing local justice and giving me the feeling that I made people's problems go away really quickly for both parties."

AFTERWORD

THE MODERN MOBSTER

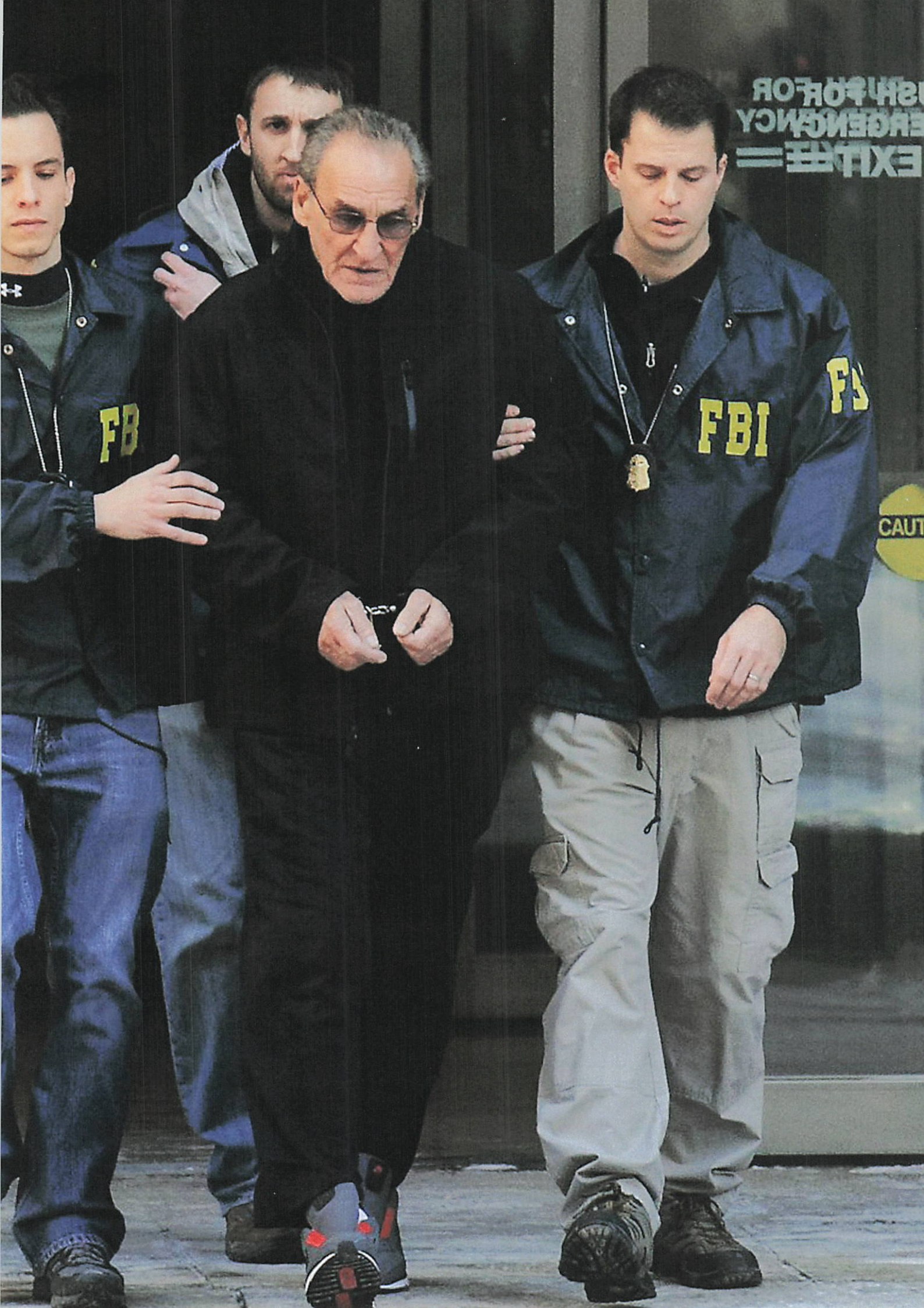
BY ALYSSA SMITH

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED, SAID THE FBI IN 2011, JUST six weeks after the arrests of 127 alleged gangsters in the New York metro area. It was the largest roundup of wiseguys ever, and it left the Colombo family leaderless in addition to greatly harming the manpower of the Gambinos. Then the FBI packed up, reducing the number of squads operating to address La Cosa Nostra from five to just three.

It was a controversial move. The FBI's reduction of manpower mirrored its actions in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, when the Mob was abruptly made not a priority. (FBI director Robert S. Mueller III even excluded the Mafia from a 2002 list of the agency's most pressing challenges—a list that began with "Protect the United States from terrorist attack" at the top.) In 2011, Mueller explained the move as a necessary one. In a speech, he said: "The playing field has changed. We have seen a shift from regional families with a clear structure to flat, fluid networks with a global reach."

According to historian Selwyn Raab in his 2006 book *Five Families*, the FBI vastly underestimated the resilience of the Mafia in

THE SLOW WHEELS OF justice caught up with Vincent Asaro when FBI agents arrested him in 2014. The Bonanno capo, charged with involvement in the 1978 heist of $6 million from Lufthansa that was dramatized in *Goodfellas*, beat the rap. But in 2017, Asaro pleaded guilty to arson charges; he now awaits sentencing.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2001, and that complacency directly led to its resurgence. Mueller had previously reduced the size of the bureau's Criminal Division in 2003 while creating and adding to the Counter Terrorism Division.

NATURALLY, THE MAFIA SEIZED ADVANTAGE while the FBI concentrated on threats overseas, but it did so carefully. Reacting first to the rash of informants and made men turning state's evidence over the past few decades, La Cosa Nostra made broad changes to membership requirements. At Joe "the Ear" Massino's trial in 2004, former underboss for the Bonanno family Sal Vitale disclosed new steps taken by the Commission to ensure loyalty among its members, including requiring members to have Italian blood from both parents and eliminating recent convicts from drug charges—the goal being to weed out anyone who was vulnerable to becoming an informer to escape harsh narcotics prison sentences. It also ramped up its hugely profitable rackets, such as gambling and loan sharking. (Raab explains that betting with the Mob is a smart move for gamblers, as any winnings would be untaxed—smart, of course, as long as you are able to pay.)

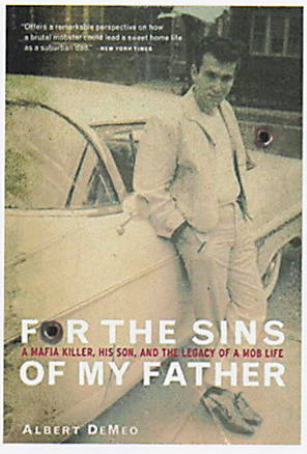
Even with drastically reduced resources, the FBI has recently scored big wins. In March 2017, the agency charged 10 alleged members of the Bonanno family with crimes ranging from racketeering to loan sharking and murder, and in May, it placed 19 members and associates of the Lucchese crime family behind bars to await trials. "As today's charges demonstrate," said Acting U.S. Attorney Joon Kim in May, "La Cosa Nostra remains alive and active in New York City, but so does our commitment to eradicate the Mob's parasitic presence."

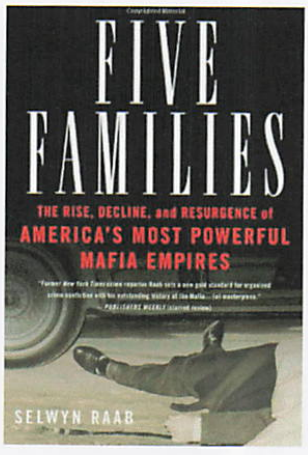
The FBI and local law enforcement are taking realistic measures to minimize the Mob and its reach, but that reach is now global, said Mueller in 2011. "This is not *The Sopranos*, with six guys sitting in a diner, shaking down a local business owner for $50 a week. These criminal enterprises are making billions of dollars from human trafficking, health-care fraud, computer intrusions and copyright infringement." Focusing on the partnerships that La Cosa Nostra has with overseas cartels has been successful, but it's difficult to know what's to come and what form the next evolution of the Mafia will take.

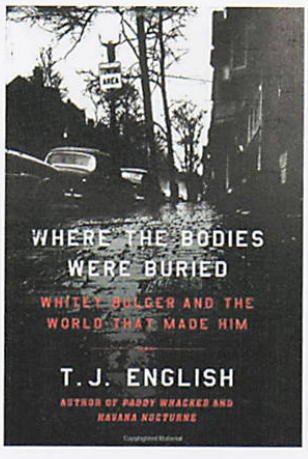
In the words of the author of the RICO law, G. Robert Blakey, "We don't win the war against the Mob. All we can do is contain or control it."

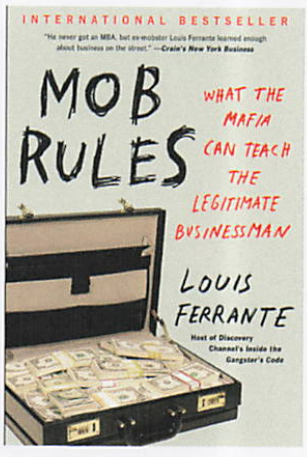
In Print

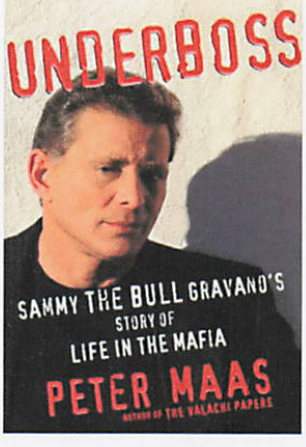
Crime journalists have covered the Mafia extensively, and some former gangsters have found a new income stream: publishing tell-alls, biographies and even business books

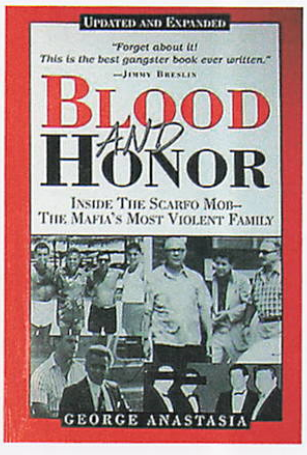


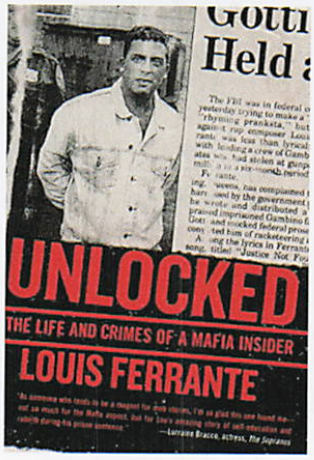


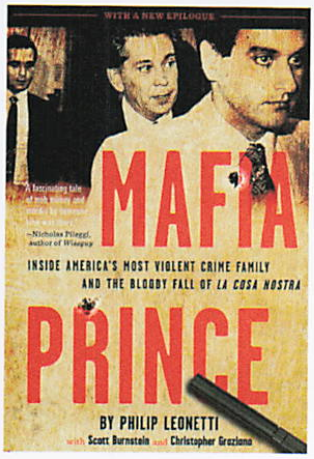


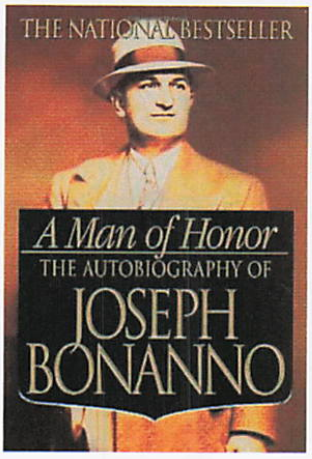


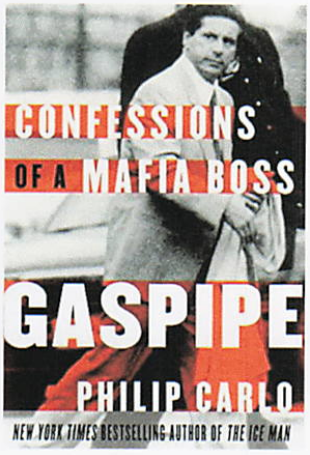


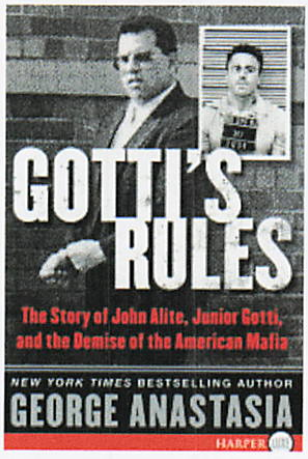


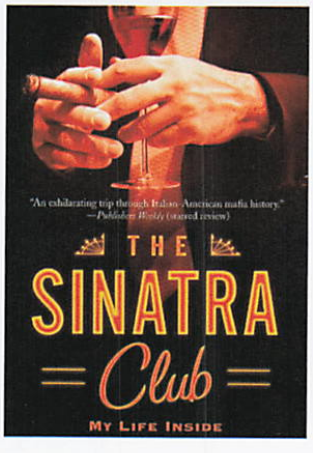


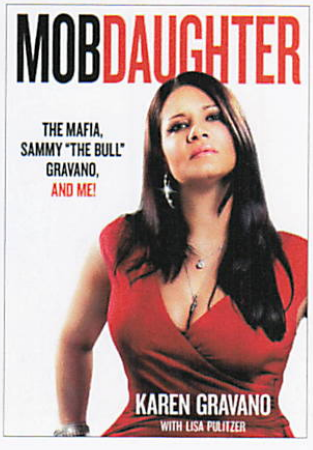












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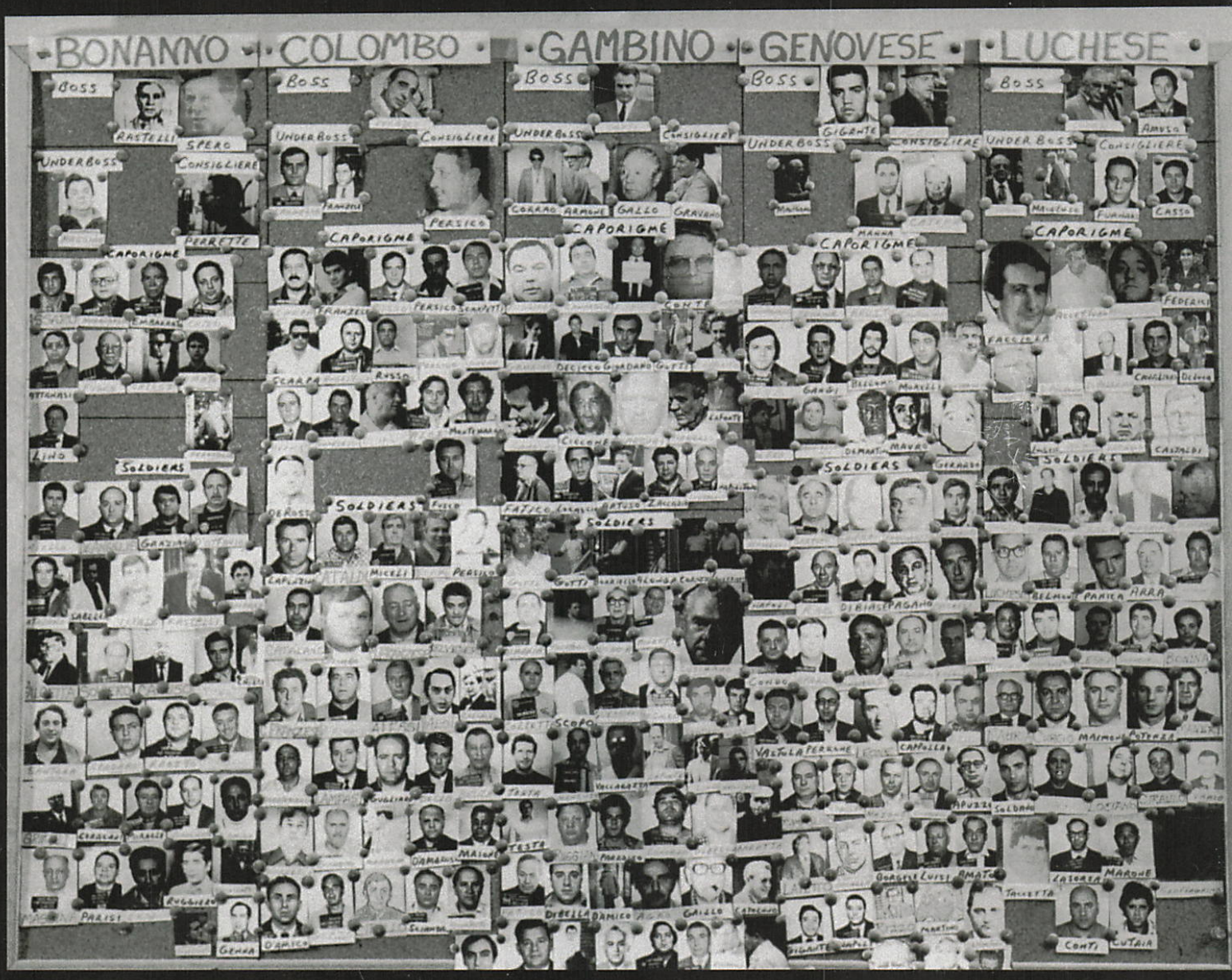
CELL SERVICE

FIRST PRISON TERM

Sentenced in 1929 for carrying a concealed, unlicensed revolver, Al Capone suffered through about seven months of prison life at Pennsylvania's Eastern State Penitentiary. He made it work: the warden allowed the gangster comforts such as Oriental rugs, fine furniture and even a radio.



ON THE BOARD

The Five Families of New York, from bosses to underbosses, capos and soldiers, in 1988